



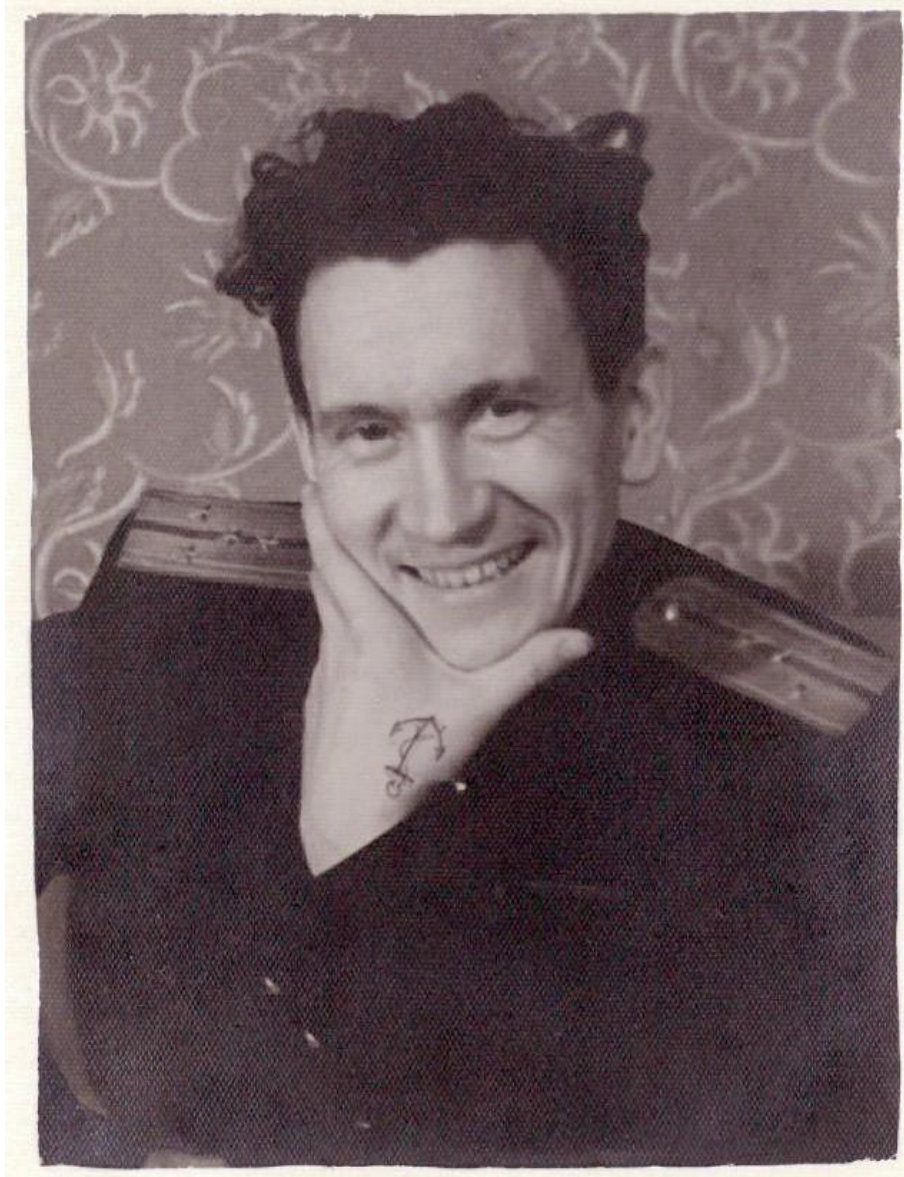
*M. V. Golitsyna*

# THE DON... FLOWS QUIETLY

Synergetic novel

*Dedicated to*

*my father, Vasily Ivanovich Golitsyn,  
and all defenders of the Fatherland*



*«...The land, with which you were starving together - you can't ever forget! »*

**All Right!**  
**V. Mayakovsky**

*"We are marching  
through a storm of bullets,  
making sure that  
at death  
we'll be reincarnated  
as steamboats,  
written lines,  
and other things that never fade."*

**To comrade Nette, a steamboat and a man.**  
**V. Mayakovsky**

III level of consciousness (thoughts):

It's the *Tikhiy Don* fast sleeper train, and no wonder, there are no tickets... OK, what about other trains?!

Well, Moscow... "is the nastiest little hole of all the towns of Russia. I was all but starved there, to say nothing of having a narrow escape of being..." and so on through the text., by and large, as my father liked to quote...

II level of consciousness (feelings):

My father... Won't I fulfill his last request?!

Or maybe I continue doing stupid things?! - But I have already learned... and now I know for sure that I'd rather regret the things I've done than regret the things I haven't done!

III level of consciousness (thoughts):

Most likely, I will be able to get the earth... But will I be able to return home? After all, the border may be closed any moment during the holidays... For them, 1 May is not a holiday, to say nothing about Victory Day, the holiday... of the "invaders"... And it was not only my father who used to tell... But uncle Aaret, and uncle Wally, and aunt Leily, too... how the crowds... were kissing the "liberators" horses' muzzles in gratitude...

And me, myself... I also saw the photos! Photoshop was not yet created, and there were not so many closely involved... into fabricating the evidence... planted as part of an elaborate hoax...

II level of consciousness (feelings):

It's good that my father doesn't see how our relatives and friends of the "dominant nation"... suddenly, as if by magic, change their preferences and piety... - That's the result of the "national policy": never mind that the one is an idiot, or a rascal, or a thief "in iniquity"... but let's make him... a secretary, a director, the president., and as to the Russians and other "Russian-speaking"... - no, no, never...

Although, of course., not local cretins are conducting all these orgies...

Is it possible to impose "democracy" on the immature minds?! -

So, no wonder, that they are shouting today: "No bread to Russians! Nor with ration stamps, nor, moreover, without...!"

When my father recalled the siege of Leningrad, he used to mention the Leningraders standing in endless, silent and quite often doomed lines... They were standing for bread, the daily norm of which for workers was only 250 grams, and for all others - half as much... And my father showed how people were eating this bread - not in bites, but in tiny crumbs., savoring each...

Severe frost... but people were standing in the hope to get bread, like the last breath of the air... The one who had managed to get this sip - he had a chance to survive until the next day's... And the one who did not have the chance - fell right there... in the queue, like a frozen log...

But still there was no one cutting in line or shouting... who to give bread... how much... and who not to give it at all... - So easily... the Leningraders preferred a common grave rather than the loss of human dignity...

10 000 deported... Of course, It *is* a tragedy... However., it has already become a tradition since their first independence...

But what about thousands of Russian soldiers and officers shot... on the ice of the Narva river in 1918., who pushed forward this independence for them...

What about civilian women and children killed in the Narva-2 concentration camp....?! By the way, the conditions there were even worse than in a Nazi concentration camp: no beds, no blankets, no clothes, and no medicine, - nothing... And close by, on the railway tracks, there were hundreds of coaches with the property of the cut-off Russian army... And the present "hero" Laidoner confiscated everything in favor of his "Great Native land"... Let the Russians lay on the railway track sleepers for days... affected by a hard killing frost... Thank you, Russians, a thousand times over... for our Independence!

...And as to their dealings with the Waffen-SS troops... I just cannot recall this in cold blood...

And what about plants, factories, universities, schools, scientific institutes., that is, advanced industries and agriculture, science and education, culture and medical care., created during the "the occupation" years..?!

And now they preach to others... what *civilisation* is and claim compensation for damages by the Soviet occupation!

So much... enough... for not sinking to their level... I am just speaking about objectivity and selectivity in historical inquiry...

Everything has been turned upside down and mixed up... How to go on?!

I level of consciousness (emotions):

Oh, Gods!!! My Lord, please, help me!!!

II level of consciousness (feelings):

Oh, well... I don't want to call Yarik so much... But it also concerns *his* father's request! Actually, he promised for a whole year to go for the earth... and put me into hot water... *Morgen, morgen, nur nicht heute, sagen alle faulen Leute...* Here is *morgen!*

III level of consciousness (thoughts):

He will again say that he doesn't believe in the mystical rubbish., the request from a dead.; he will eloquently twist a finger at a temple, calling me an idiot... No, a freak... And he will say, for sure, something like, "if someone has no brains – he is crippled for the rest of his days!" Or, "without mind – anyone is blind!"

II level of consciousness (feelings):

My father passed away in the morning... I was at work, and Wanda called us and Yarik... When I came home from work, my kids had turned the whole apartment upside down: my father's pictures were spread out all over and piled high all around... That was their reaction to the pain and suffering experienced alongside the loss... And Senka, seeing the depth of sorrow that had opened up inside me, inconsolable., told me, "I'll give birth to Petrukha!"

Yarik came to our parents' place about a half an hour later., and just of a sudden father returned to say goodbye to him... No wonder... his son, the only and beloved!

I don't know what my father told Yarik... Perhaps, that from the moment on... he became the patriarch of our clan... Probably, he charged him with the task of taking care of us... all...

Though, to me... he returned a year later...

But on that winter day, when I came into the instantly deserted home... of my parents, and was about to go to my father's room, he called me from another one... As it turned out his (corpse, remains...?) body had been taken into another room...

By the way, about the same... I was always terrified by the dead, cemeteries, and anything ritual that somehow may be associated with death... But *our own* dead, as it turns out, are not actually dead, departed, passed away, or deceased... They are *gone.*, and, therefore, it's not scary not only to touch them, but even to kiss...

I remember how my granny Julia was lying in a coffin., it was already getting dark, and at home, in our huge apartment with squeaky old parquet and the same squeaking doors., there was no one, just her and me... And suddenly I felt terrible pangs of guilt and remorse for my selfishness and callousness... I rushed to her in tears, begging for forgiveness... And she so... easily waved her chubby little hand with chubby little fingers... dismissively... meaning, "You, silly thing, don't torture yourself., *go with God*, I forgive you..."

IV level of consciousness (karma):

Ooh., the relationship with my brother is far from being the most cordial one...

However., same with my sister! It's amusing, why in such a large and close-knit family of my parents were so... *different* children born?! And we were being brought up in the same way... Yes, I know... this theory... that different children should be brought up in different ways... But there is also a theory, according to which the main thing in raising

is to have love in the family... And how much love we did have...

However, they loved., as they could... And it's me., who should feel being hurt and insulted... When Yarik was moving to Moscow, father gave him his car, which cost... (*Oh Mamma Mia!*) Only the factory manager and father had such a car... And the garage cost almost as much...

I was given the country cottage, much of a wreck, which is impossible to sell at all... And even if I sell it, the money won't be enough to buy even a junker, thrown from Europe... Though., he clearly believes that our parents left me "the property", where he and Lenka had slaved away tirelessly... And as for the car with the garage, he has forgotten about them completely...

So, to someone, i.e. to me, – everything; and to others, i.e. to him, - nothing... As Vasily Azatykh, my colleague, comrade colonel... was fond of repeating...

My Lord, what am I driving at....?! – But why., the hell, he secretly got (to Moscow!) this rickety-rackety bench hewn by father out of firewood... Like., this is all that he had inherited from his parents...

Although... father really did everything thoroughly... not only benches... Seeing me off as a PhD student, he was also thoroughly admonishing, "Liza, please, be absolutely serious about the matter... not only write your thesis well... but also make it useful for the humankind..."

III level of consciousness (thoughts):

Probably, the higher forces place arch-enemies of the past lives in the same family: let them find a common language! Anyway, in their place I would do it this way...

Yes, the Wisdom of Solomon is evidently in the following: in this lifetime treat your enemies as siblings to-be in a next lifetime; and in a next lifetime don't treat your siblings as, though former, but still enemies...

So, I must call! *No...* tickets to Rostov-on-Don... Holidays! Well, if anyone can really get a ticket, so it's just him!



Otherwise, the post... damn it!  
What for... to be elite?!

Oh! No lyrics, please...! Not now!

Good, that Tolik jumped inside an already moving train... Look what muscleheads are walking about... At least I have a man next to me - my support! But then I have to ask Yarik not for a ticket, but for two... And this is twice as hard... Come on, let him get at least one! That's it... I am calling! And here is a public telephone...

- Reception...
- Hello, can I speak to the general, please?
- Identify yourself first, please...
- I'm his sister.
- Well., is it... how I should introduce you?
- Yes!
- Hold on, please...

I level of consciousness (emotions):

So insolent! And my tone is so cocky... But he pushed me to the limit! I have the right!

III level of consciousness (thoughts):

This reminds me very much of something like:

- Hello, baby, call dad to the phone!

- And who's talking?

- His boss.

- And which one?! The one who is the world's biggest asshole, or the one who is a complete idiot..?

Somehow she takes her time...

- Hello...
- Hi!
- Liza, are you?!
- No, it's her twin!
- Are you in Moscow?!
- One minute you know everything, and another - nothing...
- But Lena is at home!
- I am on business, just going via Moscow...
- Good, then come to my place here...
- No, I'm in a hurry... I was given only a four day vacation... That is, to Gorbатов and right back...
- Now I cannot go with you... I have already told you that I am planning to go there as soon as possible. I am even planning a business trip approximately in that direction.

Granny Julia's words...

- OK, you will go, but later... And I am going now!  
Any moment the border may be closed, and what to do then - no one knows...

- But I give you my word!

- Yarik! I am already in Moscow! And all what is expected of you – it's two tickets for the next available train!

- Are you with Tolik?

- No, with a lover...

Yes, yes... with Tolik... He didn't want to let me go alone and jumped inside an already moving train...

- He was right to do so! It is now so restless everywhere... Well... Call me back in 10 minutes.

Hardy! – Why should I blabber on...?

Am I asking for it?!

Now you are talking! Or maybe it's just a bulletproof excuse to take time off., and then to refuse....?! As in the joke about an old Jew selling sunflower seeds outside a bank...

- Uncle Izzy, lend me some money until tomorrow...

- I cannot. I have a contract with the bank: I don't lend money, and they don't sell sunflower seeds...

But all the same., now I have to find Tolik. Somehow he is buying water for too long...

Where is he now? Or has the water also finished in this country? – Certainly... feels like it...

It's good that we are with little luggage and dressed for taking up canoeing... only the bare essentials and in their most compact form... Well, there is Antoine, «Tolik in Russian"!

- Well? Were you lucky to get Yarik?

- I was.

- So?

- Asked me to call back in 10 minutes., unless it is a polite refusal...

- Come on...! That's okay... Shall we have something to eat...?

- A good idea! The only question is where...

- Yes... Nowhere... It's so dirty everywhere around...

- It feels as if janitors no longer exist as a class... and everywhere... there are beggars with pathetically outstretched hands... As if it's not a big holiday today...

Oh, these Democrats., drove the country to the breaking point... Holy shit!

II:

My father's words! These Democrats... with their unintelligible and meaningless liberal gibberish...

laid their hands on everything... and there is no way of stopping them...

By the way, carelessness on the state level is indistinguishable from a betrayal... And what to do?! The wolf catches only the weak sheep!

And none of them will go to the fronts and barricades to sacrifice their present., because nothing is sacred to them... And, as always, hard workers, peasant children, and those, like my nephew... Timka, will go to shed blood for the "ideals"... - That is, all those, whom they consider and, with a contemptuous grin, call "patriots" - ... whom they call "unwashed Russia"... Those, who have dirt under their nails...

Yes, but it's not dirt – it's soil...

They have their *Motherland* under their nails!

Look, give some money to this woman with a baby...

- To a Gypsy woman?!

III:

Perhaps Tolik has recalled, how in the same Moscow I was mercilessly fleeced by Gypsies and almost cursed... Our friends and we... were spending time in the Gorky Park, the guys were paying for everything... I was supposed to pay for our taxi back home... to the Lenin Hills... So, in the end, we had to go there on foot!

- She is human, too, isn't she?!

Her eyes are so hungry and infinitely unhappy, and the baby seems very sick...

II:

Good, that father doesn't see it... Otherwise he wouldn't survive this anyway! How he used to say, "And what we were shedding blood, sweat, and tears for"... His scenario played out!

- How do you know that?

- In the first place, it is visible; and secondly, by the smell... of a deadly disease...

III:

Death also has a smell...

- How much?

- Decide yourself.

Why doesn't he believe in my gift?! Probably, because this gift showed up too suddenly...

IV:

Oh, yeah... Svetlana was much surprised when she was passing me on a gift, then another, and another... Even now, in sound mind and memory, I cannot say for sure how many of them were given there... But my stupidity didn't allow me to ask then, what kind of gifts... Thank you, thank you... BUT WHAT FOR?! And, basically, is it a gift at all?! And what are others?! WHAT FOR?! Unwittingly, Dr. Simpson from "The House that Swift Built"

comes to my mind, "We have chosen you because you are the most stupid of all doctors!"...

And then father... and his request, the materialization of St. Nicholas., and the subsequent catharsis... and "epiphany"., i.e. the vision of putrefying people coming my way... I was walking along the waterfront, and towards me, decaying from their vices, corpses "in the flesh" were coming... I had the eerie sensation of seeing it!

It was good, that Antoine was going by my side, holding my hand in his – living and warm... Otherwise, I would definitely have bats in my belfry!

And then.., when he used to lead me by the hand from room to room... when a mystical fear inside me was lurking in its scary melodies... and when I was begging him even to have me committed to a nuthouse...

And again.., when he was covering me with his body... that night at the cottage... when the walls were shaking and cracking... I am still wondering, what it was... Only poltergeist, and that's it?

To give, or not to give - that is the question! Yes, for someone it's a lucrative business, and for someone - a weak hope for survival... But more often it's a question to your soul - is it able to share, to tear off from itself... And the more difficult it is to part with the last money - the more important it is for your soul...

Yeah.., and the metaphysics here is simple.: easy you give your last... - the world will more easily and generously return a hundredfold on your money... Though, your generosity should be disinterested.., even if you know this law...

Lots of sewage, large heaps of garbage, hungry eyes, and dirty hands (and not only hands...) and, as the pinnacle of cynicism - "bad girls", prancing around in the manner of "bestsellers" from overseas... Everything is available, everything is possible, and only well-lined pockets and brazenly naked bodies are valued... - the younger, the better...

Where are our values, where is our Moscow?!

The World Festival of Youth and Students somehow comes to my mind... That was, really, a big holiday...

Summer.., the slogans "For Peace and Friendship" are everywhere around... The year 1957.., we are passing via Moscow, and I am 3 years old... Of course, then I did not know how to read, but my parents bought me a kerchief with a symbol of the festival..: a five-color flower (because people around were dancing on the streets holding hands with foreigners from five continents)... along with the background of Pablo Picasso's *Dove*, against which these words were written...

This was my favorite "festive" kerchief, which served me afterwards for quite some time... reminding me always about Moscow with its skyscrapers, wondrous buses (It was the first time I saw the *Icarus*), new automobiles *GAZ 21 Volga* (those, which were with sloping sides, and in which "the head" and "the butt" were still visible) and the first minibuses... Of course, then I did not know all the names, but from the height of my father's shoulders the image appeared fabulously beautiful and unreal...

I remember the new building of the University on the Lenin Hills... We came out from a pavilion of The Moscow Metro and just of a sudden saw... unthinkable space covered with good black earth to the horizon (most likely, it was friable soil and greening of the University land was being done, as I now understand it)... And against the horizon... there was a *Palace* of the otherworldly beauty, to which a chain of "important" people was leading... *Important...* because they looked so soulful and aspiring... Well, like in the "Soviet Cinema" (not fake movies like *Cossacks of the Kuban*, but real ones, like *Beware of the Car*, *Nine Days in One Year*, *Spring on Zarechnaya Street*, *It Happened in Penkovo*, *There Is Such a Lad*)... without exaggeration.., life-size.., as if filmed with a hidden camera! And my father, bending toward me: "You're going to study there!"  
And right he was!

My Moscow... was neatly combed, i. e. brushed neatly and groomed nicely.., with green plantings along all highways and roads, and thoroughly

washed and bleached for holidays... (Making you realize without further ado... why Grandpa Lenin used to carry logs at subbotniks and voskresniks in the Kremlin grounds!)

My Moscow was a city of theaters, exhibitions, debates, insights, discoveries..., walks till the very morning, with much delight and admiration at it, Moscow, from the same Lenin Hills... Also, sessions, test, exams..., again sessions and tests... and dreams of happiness for everyone on the entire planet...

And here it is... this happiness!

And people in Moscow were also of a special type. They could be divided into two categories: "Muscovites" and "guests of the capital"..., and these groups, in their turn, could be divided into numerous subgroups... Of course, the most interesting of all these subgroups was "native-born Muscovites"..., who, easily taking a shortcut to city through yards, found it difficult to answer you how to get to Bohdan Khmelnytsky street (for them it was still Maroseyka street); who had never been in the mausoleum; they thought that Moscow was small (because they had friends everywhere); who had a specific type of speech with lingering vowels in words, their opinions on every issue, and unambiguous attitude to power...

And there was still such a category (and, unfortunately, quite numerous): "Caution with the closing doors, the next stop is Paris!

Comrades! Comrades! Step away from the metro coach! Let me close the doors!"

So... we have made an offering to the gods, and now it's possible to start out! That was the ritual in ancient Rome..., wasn't it...? Or maybe in Hellas...? - What's the difference?! The main thing is not to incur the wrath of the elements!

Yes, but into account only unselfish deeds are taken! - And it was a selfless act... It's just now that this stupid idea has crossed my mind, but originally it was a spontaneous act of compassion... God, thank you!

- Done!

- Thank you, dear! Well... Have 10 minutes passed?

- 15.

- Then I'm calling.

- Reception ...

- Good afternoon!

- Good afternoon, Elizaveta Petrovna!  
Connecting...

- So, Liz... no tickets, even all my reservations were used, I'm trying to contact the Minister for Railways... but so far in vain... but you don't worry, he will be found anyway... in 20 minutes, hardly later., so, call me in half an hour.

- Okay, bye.

- Well, how's it going, Liz?

- No good... no tickets. He is looking for the Minister of Transport...

- If there are no tickets, so you do not have to go there...

- Come on... I'll go on foot!

- And I'll be forced to trudge behind you?

- Nothing of the kind... I'll throw you on the road, or I'd better send you back home to the kids.

- Wandochka is there, and she can cope well with them.

- Excuses... excuses... Although, of course, I'm very grateful to you, I would be very uncomfortable here without you.

- How the Leningradsky station has changed... and Moscow, in general... It is not our Moscow anymore... All these video salons, vulgar girls in leggings... so low farce... so shoddy... What have we come to....?!

That's the assistant! Our Vice President... of the State bank is proud of his highly professional personal assistant... She is a far cry from...! And he is a far cry, too!

Okay, okay, it's not okay... not at all!

"Well, if it's like this even in Mossovet..."

Tolik has no doubts concerning me, we have been together for 20 years... So, he knows me inside and out...

And he really... is not indifferent to his *dear* mother-in-law. They have obviously an astral relationship, and, maybe, even a karmic one!

I remember how, when I was a PhD student... when the first floodgates to the "Western influence" were opened, the first group of American so-called "students" – interns appeared... (Enough to recall the famous "student" Michael, who was something around 40 years old: speaking fluent Chinese, asking provocative questions, and sitting silently in the darkness of a corner, just observing and making mental notes of everything...

Or Tanya Shulgina, who was the best to speak Russian, especially something like "thy father and thy mother"..., was also a very colorful figure...

And Mary?! Oh, she was a shoe of a different color - open, inquisitive, with a genuine interest to everything...

And altogether It was such an American vinaigrette...!)

When they were here, Mary's father, with whom she was very close emotionally and spiritually,

passed away.., but she didn't go the funeral... to say goodbye to him... It was so incomprehensible to me, and I asked her... She answered, "Expensive..." And still... *at that moment...* the situation didn't become clearer...

To make a long story short.., once... Mary and I, we were walking down Kalinin avenue around 11 p.m., and suddenly she says, "Happy you are... You can safely walk around the city at night... In New York we are devoid of this..." *Then*, I did not understand her., but *now* I do... and very well, even in the daytime...

It feels, as if from all over the Soviet Union., all the one-eyed, one-legged, one-armed, orphaned and needy... were gathered together and, like flower beds and vases with flowers before, were placed all over around, in the very heart of the capital...

What have we come to....?!

Oh, if at least someone knew the answer to this question...

Yeah... the most expensive thing in life is stupidity.., we pay for it the most!

Once Senka asked me, "Mom, why are... eager scoundrels always forcing their way to power?" ("Pal Andreitch are you a spy?")... And I started to answer him ("- You see, Yura..."), "You see, the majority of the people, participating in an election, are good-natured and tolerant, and in conditions of a democratic society exactly this majority elects a leader... And a good human firmly believes that all the people around are the same., like him... And modesty is also one of his, such a human, virtues...

And suddenly he sees someone who, in addition to all his own merits, has also such rare qualities as... steadiness and courage in a demanding situation (which are often mistaken for charisma) and, of course, he decides to cast his vote for this... bright and extraordinary person... And then, when this particular person (because of his vice and folly, in all his imperfection) cannot stand the energy of his post's power and becomes a villain... the electorate slowly begins to realize that it took "the cheek and audacity" for "chutzpah"; "idealism" -



Well... When we clarify the tickets situation, we'll have to eat... I can't stand anymore.

- You're like a little kid: if not to eat, then drink a bit, or fall in love with any miss...

- Come on, to fall in love., I am so desperately hungry... I am trying hard not to turn up my toes...

- *If someone is hungry indeed,*

*The vulgar girls in leggings*

*Won't stir up interest*

*In a young prince...!*

- Well, not that young, and not a prince!

- 37 years for men - it is, believe me, just infancy; and as to the prince... OK, be my consort!

- Look, on the cover... there's another prince!

- Why?! Godunov?! He is a "nonreturnee", isn't he?! If I am not mistaken., in 1979, he remained in the United States during the Bolshoi Theatre tour...

- Just an old magazine... Amusing, how did it get here?! Someone might have left behind...

- With Plisetskaya... So, it's 1971., when she invited him to dance with her in the *Swan Lake*...

Yeah, someone has left., twenty years ago...

You... Don't you rush...!

- Agree: okroshka with kvas will be hellish good for us!

for "vision"; "intellect" – for "wisdom"; and "hypocrisy" for "kindness"...

That is... I wanted to say., that exactly these, who are eager for power and prestige, should not be allowed to go ahead... in no way.; that modesty should be wise; that if we want to have enlightened leaders - we need to become such... ourselves; and, in general, we have to blame ourselves for everything wrong... We shouldn't be passionate intellectuals, we must be good-natured sages., and then we will be voting for a quite different leadership... And, oh, it isn't that easy at all!

Although, of course, all this is very controversial... Alexander the Great, Caesar, Cleopatra, Boabdil, Peter I, Catherine II, and Napoleon... - they were not scoundrels, and they sought power and influence for very different reasons... And the fate was selecting them by other parameters...

Oh, mamma mia! Clear: the tongue always turns to the aching tooth...

Oh, my Goodness... Where are we rushing?! Why?! What for? Are we crazy?! Everything is so unsafe, hazardous, perilous, dangerous, risky... Well, that's okay with Moscow... - I understand everything here... I can immediately determine what people are up to., what part of the city they are from... – the people of Chertanovo and Yasenevo differ from the people from the South-West or Krasnaya Presnya, and even more differ... from Chernogolovka or Peredelkino...

I can immediately see who... from which university graduated... - from Lomonosov Moscow University, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, Bauman Moscow State Technical University, Moscow State Institute of Steel and Alloys, or... And at MSU... can accurately even name a department - the Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics, Faculty of Biology, History or Journalism ...

- By the way, is half-hour over?

- Nearly.

- OK! I'm going to call!

Or let's go together, so as not to waste time searching for each other.

- Reasonable. Do not touch the bag, I'll take it. Watch your feet, don't step on someone...

- Don't step yourself!

- Reception...

- Will you, please...

- Yes, Elizaveta Petrovna, I am getting you through to Yaroslav Petrovich.

- Thank you.

Hi!

- *Listen to me carefully*: go to the Kazan railway station and find the duty station manager, who has two tickets left for your name (the Rostov train to Millerovo); unfortunately, not in a sleeper and not together, but in the same car. The train leaves in 2 hours.

- Oh, you are my dear, thank you very much!

- Well... *I'll repeat again*...: be extremely careful, don't get acquainted with anyone in the street... under no circumstances... and even with very nice people... It's really very restless., and reports come quite disappointing... You *do* understand what I mean, don't you...

When you are in Moscow on your way back, give me a call. Well., if something goes wrong there., call me. I have friends there, too...

- Thank you, *brother*, thank you! Hugs and kisses to everyone!

- Say hello to Tolik!

- OK! I will! Bye!

But Russia... is huge... Even Leningrad cannot be compared with Moscow... And there... I don't know anything and understand nothing... - Oh, it's very stupid, on our part! And who will take us for reasonable people... if I myself doubt our common sense....?!

GOD! Please help me!

Oh là là!

Why do you always treat me like a moron?!

I don't care ...

Hooray! God, thank you!

Ooh, I just knew it!

Brother! *Veri on paksem kui vesi!*

V level of consciousness (The Teacher):

When it gets too hot., straight away "brother"...

By the way... Yarik did make use of his post! He did abuse his position... when arranging our father's funeral - a common captain, 3rd grade, - with military funeral honors., i. e. guards of honor and the firing of volley shots... But then I didn't understand this... I was just puzzled and

indignant... How come... instead of seamen - soldiers, and not in full uniform... In a word, not a platoon of the Kremlin guards of honor...

It was on December 29... Frost and snow... The guys were wearing worn-out greatcoats, their faces and hands were reddened, chapped, frostbitten in the icy wind.., as if they were not in 1989, but in 1941.., 42... How did they manage, experiencing numbness in their fingers.., to press the triggers...?!  
But now I do understand... - *a common captain was being buried by common defenders of the fatherland...*

Why have I been nurturing this long-term grudge?! Humans are so weak and resentful... - Humans in general or me, personally...?! Right, uh-huh!  
Lord, forgive me, please!

And with my sister the same... She was sitting on the dole, but, when she heard about our "difficulties", immediately.., "Come to the States! You'll stay at my place!"  
And why have I had a dirty great chip on my shoulder for so long... thinking everybody was against me....?!  
Now, here.., it seems so worthless, if not... small-minded...

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Well, well... it *is* a passenger coach... I guess, even after the war coaches were better... It's so dirty and dusty, Mamma Mia! Clear, that it isn't the Baltic direction... But still...  
And the smell... Garlic, chicken, eggs... and even something less pleasant, but... of human origin... It's natural and expected, but this trip seems to be physically difficult for me... Albeit, of course, it's better than on foot.

Pardon, auntie, actually it's my bunk... And actually this auntie is around 40... That is... I am not much younger...

G is the fourth (not the fifth!) letter of the Ukrainian alphabet, or maybe just a fricative

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- Good afternoon.
- **G**ood.., sit **g**ood to window... **G**et newspaper, or even... **g**et cloth..., scratch and better it... Clean is here, they just cleaned.., no fear...
- Thank you.

pronunciation of the phoneme in the southern dialect of the Russian language... The train goes to the Don, not to the Dnieper... But, anyway, to the south of Russia!

- Like *salo*? Much tasty...
- No, thanks. I have just had lunch...

The smell of dust... is the worst for me... Dust by 80% consists of horny outermost layers of the human skin epidermis, that is, of dead skin cells., dead flesh... So, no wonder, my head starts aching from dust...

She *is* khokhol, after all! And that's where all these familiar earthenware jars-pots-parcels wrapped in newspapers... in the avoska (this open netted shopping bag) come from...

Probably, the last time when I saw an avoska it was in days of yore... Therefore I can easily understand Joseph Vissarionovich., when Raikin was performing at his place with his interludes... Stalin was laughing his head off., and then suddenly asked, "And what is it... he has in his hand?" Raikin, to be more convincing, was holding an avoska in his hand...

However, this story is about something different:

*The leader was far away not only from the people,  
But also from their modes of life and feelings...!*

On this occasion father's citation of *the Russian officer code of honor* immediately crosses my mind, which he was fond of reciting with... or no reason...:

"- no sitting in public transport;  
- no walking with an avoska;  
- no standing in queues;  
- with married ladies "never ever"... and so on... up to point 26, which already Yarik is fond of repeating, "Give your soul to God, your life - to Fatherland, your heart - to a woman, but your honor - to no one!"

- Yeah, time to dine. As you please... Why you so pale and skinny? Ailing, ain't you?
- Thank you, I am healthy.
- In cities people undernourished, not as our much pretty maidens...

Oh, that reminds me of my mother in law, "You'd better dressed more bloomers, or it makes me with the neighbors ashamed!" Can you imagine this... - to be ashamed of the first beauty of the foreign languages department.....?! What was I... in comparison to her son - the pretty perfect

gentleman Tolyusik! – That's the net result of our misalliance!

And again... bitter indignation at having been treated unfairly! What for....?! She is just from a different planet...! Should she be blamed for that?! And how can you be hurt by someone after the Ravensbrück concentration camp?!

In fact, it's her..., who raised my husband to love, to be hard-working, kind, gentle, and caring...

Thus..., resentment is the form of a special case for pride...: I want everything to be my way! And if not – it's unfair... This way two different types of pride collide..., and terribly sick sparks (sometimes, even fatal) fly in all directions...!

- Yes, yes, the city, you know..., polluted air...  
- Hm... Well, it so fatty... I not eat such... **Galya...**  
**Gaa-lyuyu...**

Don't you yell! Why are you roaring, like a tiger in the jungle!? You have bellowed the discordant crowd and the loudspeaker's popping sounds... Is this Galya... deaf, or what?!

**Galyu**, here come! I here have sausage Krakiv, buyed in shop in station, 20 kopecks much, as when if we have... much tasty... **Get** it! No, you **get** all... money after **give**... I just kind be from heart...

OK... the smell of kidney and heart diseases... It is clear, auntie..., what love is - you do not know... But you know what to pass judgments is..., and you know what fear, anger, rage, resentment, and hatred are...!

That's the *kind be from heart*, that's cordiality, that's geniality... and hospitality!

This reminds me of a story about Bovin, when he was visiting the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem... In his honor a reception in a monastery was organized... with an unlimited assortment of viands, served by nuns and novices... And especially by... a young and pretty one... Bovin, squinting at the novice, asks the Archimandrite, "Holy father, how far do you extend your hospitality?" - "My son, my hospitality is boundless, but this woman is mine!"

Hm... **Galya** is sitting next to Antoine... We can change!

- So he your man?  
Look, I **go** there, he **go** here... No., better you **go** there... There, from side, better look, and closet is close...  
- OK!

- Well, Liz, how are you?  
- Me?! Awesome! And you?  
- You know... I've got used to anything!  
Look, it's so beautiful...

- You'd better look at this Don Cossack ... wearing galife pants with wide trouser stripes... Real uniform of a Cossack... the right cap with a red band, a chin strap.., and the famous forelock... He looks exactly like my grandfather Ivan! Or his doubleganger - Grigory Melekhov...  
Look, maybe, Sholokhov was really writing... about his direct observations; and my grandfather was really a prototype for Melekhov?  
My father used to repeat that everyone in the "And Quiet Flows the Don" and in the "Virgin Soil Upturned" was easily recognizable... reminding of neighbors, whom he well knew...  
- Did he say anything about Melekhov?  
- No... But, you know, "the big is seen from a distance"... My grandpa and Melekhov were similar in their appearances, characters, and even fates... In fact, my grandpa was quite popular...

- And what was he?  
- You know, somehow it wasn't a habit with us in the family "to walk in the past", i. e. to recall the bygone days.  
I guess, there were a lot of dark and, maybe, even tragic pages...  
But I know, that he was always highly respected and was called, same as my father, *Knyaz*... And yet.., he at the same time... looked very much like General Brusilov and General Kornilov...  
- In general, very much like General...

Lord, thank you!

Yeah, come on, tell me how passenger coaches roll and jolt you.., in your Young Communist League, when on business trip... especially the first secretaries...

Although I'm starting to talk like someone in the street.., "rosy-cheeked Komsomol peculators, cheats, and swindlers"... It becomes you so well, my "peculator"!

You were lured into Komsomol by the promise to give us an apartment... So far... we (four of us!) still live not in "the Brezhnev way"., but in a one-room khrushchyovka in the suburbs... Next to us, there are only "chemists" (i. e. the convicted, who work in the industries with hazardous chemicals)... And your driver lives in the prestigious downtown... in our four-room apartment... "This is just disgusting and disgraceful... (I see...!) to seize apartments"!  
And this isn't the first time!

To send children to the young pioneer camp "Artek"...? - Easy! - And ours?! - "Are you... crazy?!"

A lifelong dream of my sinologist was a trip to China ... - "I cannot... Let Yura go... When will he be so lucky again?!"

Ha-ha-ha... Somehow it comes to my mind... Senka heard that the air transport for heads of the state and government officials was provided by special flights and aircraft...: with the letter "C" - for the first secretaries of the Union republics and others like them; with the letter "B" - for the members of the Politburo, etc.; and with the letter "A" - only for three guys - Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgorny... So he asked, "Dad, what letter do you fly with?" The answer was, "With the letter "S"! This - the use of the stylistic device of double actualization... of the allusion to the first letter of his family name and the allusion to something of an evaluating character... - presumably, Antoine learned from his father in law...

Well... The clairvoyant... Svetlana asked me so amusingly.., as if with genuine surprise, "So... You are a princess, aren't you?!" - For some reason, I knew immediately what she had in mind... In fact, in English "knyazhna" is princess, and in French -

- True...

Such a phantasmagoria - Knyaz, a Don Cossack, a farmer who decently earned enough money for a whole real plane and gave it as a present to the Red Army...

- And... isn't it a case of confabulation... with you?

- Of course, you could reproach me for suffering from other clinical syndromes and aberrations..., but not this one! I have never complained about memory impairment... So., this is neither confabulation., nor hallucination., nor even the false memory syndrome...

- Well, okay, okay., Professor, no offense...

And is it documented?

- What – the title or the present?

- The present.

- Wanda kept an article about my grandpa with his picture (he is standing against a background of the presented aircraft) and an article about... how my father gave his Djulbars (a German shepherd, which he had trained) as a present to border guards., also with a photo of my father as a boy... in a budenovka...

She had been keeping these rotten trash for a long time, along with granny Julia's certificate of authenticity for the title of a *noblewoman of ancient standing*, but one fine day she threw out everything at my advice...

- Very much like you...!

- My father loved to tell how he and Djulbars were masterly good at classroom disruptions...

- So he was a troublesome and mischievous varmint?!

- Come on! He was everywhere and always a high achiever! Actually, even in baking (when studying at the Quartermaster School) he got excellent grades...

princesse, and in German - Prinzessin, and in Italian - principessa...

- No, no, in no way! - I am very simple... (She looked at me reproachfully... Meaning, it's no good... cutting oneself off from the roots, i. e. from karma, from responsibilities...)

- Yes... You *are* "The Princess and The Pea"...

- That is... not a true one....?! (I was so much confused that just couldn't figure out what was there, in a fairy tale...)

- Yes! You *are* a true one... as true as it gets! So... What *did* she mean?

I think I'm just now... starting to understand my father., why he was crying bitterly alone... at the wedding... after having seen all guests off... "She was née... but has become..." - It seemed so natural to me to take my husband's last name that I hadn't even discussed it... But I could... and had to... at least... make a hyphenated last name...

Or, maybe, it's really a case of confabulation., and, in reality, I am, like in the anecdote about teddy bear Pooh, just - Bear Winnie-the-Pooh, or, even worse, – his friend Boar, but not Piglet....?! So., what is it then? Wrong pride or an inferiority complex? – Probably... an inferiority complex... as a form of wrong pride...

So., what is it then? Wrong pride or an inferiority complex? – Probably... an inferiority complex... as a form of wrong pride...

**When, finally, people will stop eating....?!**

**A leopard can't change its spots! But to be more exact... "Tell the truth, and you will lose your friend"!**

**"I have advice for you, Count, - get offended! Get offended!" – But why., what for...?**

My father's word!

Oh... look... Here is Young Werther., an educated youngster from a poor family, prone to painting, poetry and loneliness... And where to... are you

By the way, afterwards... there was even shot a feature film, called "Come, Djulbars!"

- And I have seen it... Why didn't you tell me about all that?

- I guess, topics were different... and the environment...

- So, it is running in your family... to make expensive gifts...

- It's karma of our family, now it is your karma as well...

- I'd be honored, if it is possible...

By the way, do you know what the turquoise scarab means as an amulet, as a symbol?

- Sure.., in ancient Egypt the scarab was considered to be a symbol of rebirth, turquoise - a symbol of happiness (that's why my father presented Vanda with turquoise earrings and his famous phrase "women love with their ears"), and the turquoise scarab... was seen as a symbol of well-being...

- OK... Then here you are:

*"The intricate carving  
of not pronounced words,  
Calling Back  
to virtue and elegant poise, -  
In the heritage bracelet,  
ancient and heavy,  
With the turquoise scarab,  
crawling down silverwork.*

*Shed tears, shed...  
But from any insult  
And affliction on the earth,  
from any hardship in the world -  
The turquoise scarab  
in the heritage bracelet saves,  
The turquoise scarab,  
the turquoise scarab saves..."*

- And who is it?

- Can't you guess?!

- Peredreyev? Chukhontsev? Shklyarevsky?

- Their spiritual master...

- Mezhirov? Alexander Mezhirov?

- You are a philologist!

jolting along?! Sure, not to Lotte... She's already married... Thus, *there's so much to do and so little time...* Oh, my God, and Goethe, I'm really sorry... Why should I programme his life?! God, bless him!

Block? Akhmatova? Tarkovsky? Yevtushenko? Well, no...



- Bingo! And I really like his poem about Arbat...  
You know it?

- No...

- *"Arbat is one of the narrowest streets...  
Where it's impossible to miss each other!  
But we miraculously did.  
It happened almost 20 years backwards.*

*Perhaps there was a fog... Or maybe blizzard...  
Come on... Time cannot be reversed...  
We passed without noticing each other,  
And there's nothing to remember both.*

*Do not recall it, think of the atonement -  
Feel sick and tired of despair and regret  
For that past when two souls created for each  
other  
Missed their happiness on such a narrow street."*

- Simple, but tasteful...

- But do you know about him and Yuri Grebenshchikov?

- I do., but let's talk about something more interesting...

There... look at the urchin in the boxer shorts...

- Such boxers I haven't seen since early childhood... Where did he come from? And so well-balanced... Probably, also Cossack blood and karma...

By the way, raising of a child in a Cossack family started from an early age. Boys were brought up in a strict military fashion, and, at the age of 3, they were already able to ride a horse... My father also had his own horse – *strigunok* (i. e., his age colt, because Cossacks were presented with a colt at birth)...

This upbringing was severe and permanent... At the age of 7 to 8 a Cossack was allowed to ride in the street and to learn shooting, and at the age of 10 – to learn slashing with a saber...

At first a thin trickle of water was let run to "put his hand to the plough"... - to make the blade cut water at a right angle, leaving no splashes...

Then... a boy was taught "to cut the vine", sitting, first, on a log, and only afterwards - on a horse saddled for a combat...

Remember, how Grigory Melekhov, exhausted by love to Aksinya and feeling resentful toward his

He is quite an amusing little man... – It's clear that he is grandfather's blue eyed and fair-haired boy...  
A Cossack won't entrust his cap to just anybody...

I remember how my grandpa Ivan dallied with his cap: he would place his palm face-down on the bottom of the cap., then would move it slowly., then would blow a dust speck out, or would fix the lacquer strap... But the main thing in him, of course, wasn't a cap, but dignity... of extremely high quality... Such an inherent dignity from birth... I also remember... how my parents somehow enraged him forevermore... In the morning he got up and disappeared in an unknown direction... Afterwards grandpa showed up at Linka's place in Zaporozhye., and soon after died... And, apparently, this departure of his left a gaping hole in my father's life... and a severe pain in his soul., which he couldn't overcome until his own death...

And yet... somehow... my father... before his death... had fits of remorse concerning a pilot... He felt sorry for lying him during the war... The guy asked my father after surgery, "Doctor, tell me the

father, was slashing and chopping with his saber... thick twigs poked into the ground... just to calm down and out of habit since childhood...?

Oh, by the way, hand-to-hand fighting was taught at the age of three... Even the games with boys were aimed at teaching them... a martial art, or just at making them be accustomed to working hard...

According to my grandparents' stories, my father was a varmint... He had a nanny named Varvara... She adored him, she worshipped him, and was spoiling him desperately... And this little mischievous man made gladly use of it... He was fond of riding upon her back, i. e. he regularly rode her like a horse...

But once he got it in the neck... and remembered it right up until the end of his life for... for climbing atop a glass-paneled multi-tiered *vitré armoire* (vitrine), in which a china set with monograms was stored., and for knocking it over... Of course, the fragile set broke into smithereens... Thank God, he remained alive and unharmed...

- A china set with monograms... in a glass-paneled multi-tiered vitrine in the country, in Gorbatov?! How come... Why?!

- I do not know., somehow I never asked myself anything like this, I have difficulty answering this question... How has your interest grown from... and why?!

- But you used to say that you didn't have links with the princely family...

- Ha-ha-ha... So you wanted to get into "a decent family", but, as it turned out, you just got into...

Yes... I used to say the way... as I had been told... My father was a Don Cossack, who never had any links with the princes... And people used to address him *Knyaz* only because he always carried himself with dignity, like a king... I mean manners., the suave, circumlocutory politesse, and so on... He looked debonair and handsome... He *did* graduate a military medical school...! And not only it...

- No, no... There's something wrong here...

truth, are my legs intact?" - "Sure!" And this... shortly after he had amputated his both...

I even named my daughter after her! Although, if to tell the truth., also after a character from the trilogy by Yuri German: *The Cause you serve, My dear man, I am responsible for everything.*

And indeed, why?!

And why... concerning our silver spoons... also with family monograms....?! Not those, which granny Julia used to give us as presents... Not the gold vermeil over sterling silver... inlaid with cloisonné... But those antique ones...

OK... Tell me, how... my Grandma managed with 12 rubles of her pension to do the most luxurious gifts?! For example, my first academic dictionary was presented to me by granny Julia... with such a typical joke of hers.,

*"Work, Liz, hard, and study smart!*

*Then you'll be cheerful enough when all your trials end at last!"*

Liz... And never Lizzy... - And what else to call a daring little girl - the leader of the neighborhood and the "leader of the redskins"?! However, *being daring* has a reverse side... *Being boldly unconventional*, for example... Or am I flattering myself?

By the way, all these sets of spoons with the gold vermeil over sterling silver, which we all keep

- Oh, come on! Look... Once the Marshal of the Russian Nobility came to visit Yarik at his office, and scared my brother... nearly the pants off him, "We *are* family!"

And Yarik..., frightened to death, was desperately looking around himself., "What do you mean, I'm from slaves..." His Serene Highness Prince was very offended., "Serfs were never given such names!"

- That's what I am saying!

- What are you driving at....?! Ha-ha-ha... Do you know how much they pay in Europe each year for the title? Even the lowest rank of nobility, Baron, for example... - 30 000!

- What?

- Makes no difference... even if galleons... anyway... it's an awful lot! And you want "Your Serene Highness Prince..."

- So, Wanda is *a noblewoman of ancient standing*., but Prince... is he also a nobleman...?

- Oh, what ignorance...! "Nobleman" literally means "the man with the Prince's court". The nobles were taken to the service of a prince for carrying out different assignments, like... administrative, judicial, and other similar... Although, strictly speaking, Prince *is* considered to be a rank of nobility...

- Confusing...

- No kidding... This is just the beginning...

- And what is HSH Prince?

- Well, it's "His/Her Serene Highness", the oral address being: Your Serene Highness... This title was given to younger sons of great-grandsons of the emperor and their descendants in the male line, though... it also could be granted at the will of the emperor...

- And who was addressed "Your Grace"?

- This form of description or address was used for a duke, duchess, or archbishop.

- But who was addressed "Your Excellency"?

- Well, well... Counts were, but now... they address or describe like this certain high officials of state, especially ambassadors, or the Roman Catholic Church leaders.

in memory of her... "as a keepsake"... Without metaphysics, well, no, I won't be able to explain... Alka, when he was a small kid., is thinking, who to invite to his birthday party., "Julia will come... Let her give me silver spoons as a present... She's so old and poor..."

My dear... The smell of sick... human flesh becomes unbearable...

My *Climat* is definitely inappropriate!

Francs, pounds, marks....?

Finally, they are full... Finally, they have calmed down...

This cute little kid is constantly playing with his grandpa., who probably thinks that if he knew how wonderful grandchildren were, he wouldn't have had children... I think I'm starting to understand why the elderly people have to spend more time with children... Children have faith in the future... - they "just believe in a good result", and the old people - just appreciate the past...

Everything is so peaceful and quiet... But what did Yarik mean? Though, sure, I feel the internal discord and anxiety... - And how otherwise, if the empire is crumbling?!

- But how to address Barons?
- "Your Honor", as well as all other nobles.
- Is Baron really below Count?
- Sure! This rank takes the lowest place in the hierarchy of titles; it was mainly granted to bankers, factory owners, and sometimes to others... of non-noble origin...

By the way, to my shame, I have recently learned that "master" (barin) was derived from "nobleman" (boyar) and that the boyars were not "a class" at all; and that they were not that numerous.., something like... 20-30 men...

- Yeah! This is the highest rank among the "service people of the fatherland", that is, the feudal Moscovian aristocracies, second only to the ruling princes.

This title gave the right to participate in meetings of the Boyar Duma... So, they surrounded the throne of the grand prince (later the tsar) and ruled the country together with him... and, of course, they were not numerous...

Look, it's so beautiful outside...

- Yes, I also love... beauty to the sound of the car and locomotive wheels chattering, to the aroma of garlic, onion.., Aznavour, and burst noises from the loudspeaker! By the way, your favorite song «Nathalie»...

- And why did you decide that the song is my favorite?

- Your reaction... Don't you forget that I used to be a student of Irina Zimnyaya and can easily savvy in a psychological analysis and processes of simultaneous interpreting...

- You... don't make up a story.., that's absolutely incredible.., let's go through it one more time... Humor me...

I don't even know what the song is about... You'd better translate it...

- "It takes an idiot not to understand the word *taxi*»... And you're not the one...

Okay, listen:

«Red square was empty.

In front of me..., i. e. there was Nathalie walking...

She had a pretty name, my guide,

Nathalie... (A hoity-toity little madam!)

Every time my "music lover" hears it, he becomes inwardly tense and strained... There is something private and personal... Nathalie, i. e. the name, or the story itself... or the profession....?! Once, in the car, he even jerked his free hand toward the radio... to make it louder... Or maybe he just likes the song?! - No... There's something intimate for my husband...

OK, let's have a showdown at home... Now it is somehow not very useful! Again you'll say that I am jealous with everyone.., even with a pole... A very good excuse! - "The best defense is a good offense"!

Red square was white;  
Snow lay like a carpet.  
I followed Nathalie  
On that cold Sunday...

Et je suivais par ce froid dimanche...

She spoke in serious phrases  
Of the October Revolution  
Meanwhile, I was thinking  
That after Lenin's tomb  
We would go to Pushkin's cafe (or, probably, the  
*Pushkin* cafe... Somehow I don't remember such a  
cafe in Moscow...)  
To drink chocolate.

On irait au cafe Pouchkine...

Red square was empty.  
I caught her by her arm, she smiled...  
She had blonde hair, my guide,  
Nathalie, Nathalie...

In her room at the University, (at the dorm – in  
our phraseology)  
A group of students  
Was waiting for us impatiently...  
We laughed and talked a lot...  
They wanted to know everything about me,  
And Natalie was translating (She *is* my col-  
league!).

Les plaines d'Ukraine...

Moscow, plains of Ukraine (?!) (Perhaps, it's a  
metaphor, and refers to the space, which opens  
from the heights of the hotel "Ukraine"; probably  
Gilbert Bécaud stayed in it; It's his song)  
And Champs-Élysées ...  
All blended together  
As we sang...»

Well... Hold on, I have missed...  
"We were drinking champagne, brought from  
France,  
And we were dancing...

When the friends had gone  
I stayed alone  
With my guide,  
Nathalie Nathalie...»

I've missed again. Don't touch me...  
«No October Revolution,

On n'en était plus là...  
Fini le tombeau de Lenine...

No Lenin's Tomb,  
No chocolate, no Pushkin..."  
That is, "it's already in the past, already far away..."

### Le chocolat de chez Pouchkine...

Now my life seems empty,  
But I know that one day in Paris  
It will be me who will be her guide...  
Nathalie, Nathalie...»

That's what the sad story is about!

- Why sad?  
- Because *fan-fucking-tastic!* Bizarre and far-fetched! Very amazing!  
- Why do you get angry?  
- Do I?! The smell is so annoying... I shall endure the suffering alone, as always...  
- Great! Sounds good... But that's what you wanted to...  
- Are you for real?!  
Oh, uh, okay, let's go to bed... I want to read a bit before sleeping... I'll go and brush my teeth...

I think I have just betrayed myself... and laid myself wide open!  
Fine. Be that way. I have neither the time nor the inclination for the drama right now., but I'll track you down...  
Scandal again...  
*...or at least...*  
*I'll get a slap on the wrist...*

How do you like it...? *Nathalie...* Natalka from Poltava... in the presence of still living and prospering Elizaveta Petrovna! I think it's time to cut Katka's (Catherine the Great's) head off and not to let her come to power...

By the way, with all his musical indifference, he has the same attitude to Alla Pugacheva's "The three happy days":

*«Three blessed happy days  
I had only with you.*

*I had never expected them, never waited for, -  
They were given to me by fate!»*

- Do you prefer to occupy the upper berth or the lower one?  
- The upper one, please, there's more isolated...  
- Let me help you climb up...  
- Thanks. Nighty night!  
- Nighty night!

Same as to... «They don't renounce when they do love»:

*«And you will come, when it is dark,  
When windows are hit by a blizzard,  
When you bethink for how long time  
We haven't warmed each other.  
Yes, you will come when it is dark.  
And you'll wish the warmth so much,  
The one, you didn't like before once,  
So you will even hardly wait for the three men  
Before you speaking on a payphone,  
So much you'll wish this very warmth.»*

Well, yes, that's his philosophy, you should hear him, "Someone may just feel like... a warm belly"! – Gracefully, isn't?! Yes! And, I would say, it's quite figurative, quite metaphorical...! This is nothing new... Oh, yeah? - Oh, no! In this respect... it's better not to think at all! – Why? Anything happen?

It is better to turn to the wall and into being lonely...

How did... Roy Packard's mother use to say? - "Being alone does not mean being lonely"... However, she meant something quite different... Though, show me someone who doesn't know it...

But on the other hand, why should Antoine's addiction be worse than mine?!

*«But I forget completely  
With you about all things.  
And into love, like into a deep sea,  
I am rushing just headlong.  
But you are so cold and lifeless,  
Like an iceberg in the ocean.  
And all of your sorrows  
Are under the water of black...»*

Or here is another one:

*«For you without me, my love,  
The earth will be small, like an island!  
Without me, my love,  
You'll fly with only one wing! »*

Oh... there's a hole...

- Antoine, there's a hole in your sock...
- Will you fix it?
- Come on... Is the state of our financial affairs that bad?! – As for me, I immediately lose any interest in a man wearing darned socks...
- I agree: with a hole much better... - I don't want to be lost...
- Ha-ha-ha...
- Hush, hush..., and get to sleep!

Maybe I shouldn't have gone through his feelings using the asphalt roller...?  
"Good night, sleep well, and sweet dreams!"  
I don't want to change day to night, and especially at such a disadvantageous exchange rate...  
So..., we are going along together for a bit of soil to the grave of my Dad...

\*\*\*\*\*

- Wake up, my sleeping beauty... You may oversleep your breakfast!  
- Mm... Bugger off!  
- Seriously, it's not often a woman can resist my charms... So consider me duly intrigued...  
- Why don't you leave me alone? Go on, get lost!  
- Mmm., you're delicious... Come here, let me taste you just one time...  
- I don't want to...  
- And nobody asks you, whether you like it or not... It's not optional... Get up! We are having breakfast at the restaurant!  
- You mean... they provide restaurant services on the train?! You really would risk your breakfast?  
- It's the *Tikhyy Don* fast sleeper train, which can compete only with the *Ataman Platov* train!  
- Amusing., *Ataman Platov* also was a Cossack and a Count at the same time...  
- Well, the title of count... he received in 1812 for *merit to the fatherland*... And by the way, it was the long-sought-for rank... There was even a time when he lost all hope to get it. He was feeling so terrible... and he started to drink more than he should... *Yermolov* even sent him from the army to Moscow.  
*Denis Davydov* mentioned this fact in his memoirs.  
So, that's it... no talking in formation...  
Go ahead... morning toilet and quickly to eat breakfast, the train arrives at 12:12. I have already arranged your turn to the toilet after the tall guy...  
- Oh, really? All right, thank you., dear!

\*\*\*\*\*

How easily my... drowsy conscience is being lulled by the droning sound of the train wheels....!

\*\*\*\*\*

It's the right time to ask him so pitifully, "Antoine, but do you really love me..?" - Yeah, to hear his answer with my father's words, "Honest children love neither mom nor dad., they love ice-cream!"

Are we lovers of sloppy romance?!

Ohmigod! *Count Platov*...

What vanity of human wishes! What servility!

He is a historian! And there's nothing to add...

Whenever...

I see., after the *Goethe's Young Werther*... with *Byron's languor*...

\*\*\*\*\*

Hm... How cool... I even agree to forgive... - No, to forget... for some time *Nathalie*...

This is just a royal dining coach! The starch tablecloths, the windows wide open... The side scarlet curtains flutter and swell... And there's nobody here! Only us... When we were aboard the train to Moscow, we had to stand in a queue for an hour to get into the restaurant carriage... And



here... the train is packed, but the restaurant - empty... Welcome to a different world!

For some reason, a different *restaurant* comes to my mind... "The Scapegoat"! It was the way... how my father begged my Maman's forgiveness for his "pranks"...

A white tablecloth, starched napkins, crystalware (everything our way)... on the table with an inventory number... there... in Sakhalin... with exquisite lunch or dinner... and the sign on the door to the living room... from the hand of my father's calligraphy... "The Scapegoat"!

Then, I remember, I was very puzzled... Why such an ugly name for such a lovely place....?! Why not "The Rose", or "The Mimose"... Why not "The Firebird", or, at least, "The Little Humpbacked Horse"

But now... I do see the message... As they say, "Love is evil, it will make you fall in love with a goat" ...

A warm breeze with the scent of wormwood!

«Come on... and sing a song, you – dear cheerful wind,  
You - cheerful wind, you - cheerful wind!  
You have already searched all seas and lands in the whole world  
And every song you have already heard...»

- It's so cool! And clean!

*"Captain, captain, give a smile, sir, please!*

*For a smile is like the flag on a ship!*

*Captain, Captain, gather quickly yourself together*

*Only to the brave surrender always seas!"*

- Oh, yeah... I've already ordered crispy fried eggs with pork cracklings.., sizzling, spluttering, sputtering, and spitting... Hot-girl diet, huh? Good for her!

- Sounds no worse than... muffin.., donut, scone, and eclair... However, I'm so hungry that I would have felt even the smell of a burnt breakfast tempting...

- But as to the coffee... they have only instant...

- Hmmm...

Jesus Christ, sounds good!

So rudely to deprive me of my pleasures... Oh, whatever...

- Stop whining and Lizing!  
 - Okay, okay... Fine, be that way! The eggs will do... Perfect! Uh, yeah, sure, that sounds great!  
*The sun is shining, the wind is blowing,  
 No one the fun is spoiling!*  
*-If, however, someone tries on our fun to encroach..,*  
*We'll express our strongest reproach!*  
 - *Ai-lyi-lyi-lyi-i-lyu-lyu...*  
*Antoine, I love you!*  
 - Ha-ha-ha ...  
 - I wonder, how kids are there...  
 - No doubt, well.., getting some rest! And here are our fried eggs! And the coffee - a real one?! Oh, thank you! Ugh! You are so unbelievably lucky...  
 - Gee, thanks! Thank you very much!

Really?

For once, the final word is mine!

Oh, come on, I knew it!

Judging by the mug, this auntie, in a coquettish small white apron with a snow-white lacy headdress on her head, has shared her own stock... from a tin... with the inscription... "Coffee with chicory»... God, bless her! Lord, thank you! Interestingly, she smells health... both physical and mental...!

Tolik, look: not a cloud in the sky, the vast expanse... dew-covered as if encrusted with diamonds all over... Diamonds of all possible cuts, color grades, clarity grading and carat weight... That's the real treasure... But we are puffed up in the effort to reach the ersatz... Spring.., but the steppe is already experiencing a bloom of flowers... numerous and nameless for me...

*There are the brightest brilliant yellow gorses..,  
 And lilac flowering thyme, and chamomiles, and dodders..,  
 Carnations' crimson flames, which are kept  
 useless burning...*

*Lilac flowering thyme...* This's how my father used to say...

And what is the dodder plant? Is it really the one?

It seems that my down jacket is absolutely useless here...

And the air... Is it sagebrush? Perhaps something more...

- Yeah... I think so! Indeed, all the vegetation joyfully is reaching up toward the sun... Though, over there, look, in the ravines.., probably because they are so narrow, the damp shadows of rich colors yet lie.., after the night...

Do you hear... even through the noise of the wheels.., larks....?

- Of course, I do... And you., can you hear the grasshoppers singing? The hooting sounds?

- Yeah! The steppe...

- It woke up... and now, alive, is breathing deeply, evenly, and powerfully... As my father used to describe...

I feel like singing the old Russian ballad about Stenka Razin...

*«From beyond the wooded island  
To the river, wide and free,  
Proudly sailed the arrow-breasted  
Ships of the Cossack yeomanry...»*

By the way, stanitsa Vyoshenskaya also participated in the Stepan Razin uprising...

I never heard my granny Daria sing... But she was not only the most beautiful woman in the neighborhood, but she was also the most talented female songster, the first to start singing... Grandpa Ivan used proudly to tell me... and my father, too... "She was starting with her sonorous voice against the background of a thin dreary descant"... the old, sad and pensive Cossack songs...

- And what did your grandparents do for a living?

- I've never heard, and don't know... I'll have to ask my mother...

- Do you think Wanda knows?

- Hardly... I've always been in the know of all the household matters, and, therefore, I was called "the little pitcher with big ears"... I only know that my grandfather's father was Nikiphor., because my grandfather's patronymic was Nikiphorovich...

- Sounds like a royal and religious name.

- Yeah, quite... There were bishops, and archimandrites, and even metropolitans with this name, but there were also Byzantine emperors, by the way...

- Yes, yes, I remember... Nikiphoros I, Nikiphoros II Phokas, Nikiphoros III Botaneiates...

- But in general., the name is of Greek origin and means Νικηφόρος "the one, who carries the victory".

- Sounds nice! But *Ivan*, if I am not mistaken, is also a royal name...

I wonder, who it is...

THAT'S A MIRACLE!

THAT'S THE MYSTICAL MAGIC!

THE PORTAL OF ENTRY INTO KARMA!

That's true: professionalism cannot be easily lost!

And we, linguists, were not born yesterday, too...

- Oh, yeah! Incidentally, it also got into Slavic from Greek... Ιωάννης, which means "grace of God". And as to my granny... I only know that her maiden name was Kireyeva., Daria Kireyeva! By the way, Lyubashka's maiden name was also Kireyeva... I don't know whether the name is that common, or... But that's a fact., and she looks like my granny... So, it might happen that we are not only friends, but also relatives!

It's sooo... tasty!

- Yeah, quite well... you had enough?

- More than enough!

- Well., "your home is nice, brother, but I have to go to another"! Shall we...?

- Thank you! Good for you!

- Meaning what?!

- Well, the generous tip...

- Can it be otherwise?!

- Stop clinging to the words! Just say: you are welcome!

- Maybe there's more to say?!

- You... are a... mischief-maker!

- But you... an incurable handshaker!

- And you ... Antoine ...

*Are as stubborn as the Guinea baboon!*

- I am neither the baboon nor his ass...

*I am the Papiu hamadryas!*

- Ha-ha-ha... OK, you win, man!

\*\*\*\*\*

- Liz, come on... quickly follow me! I have learned everything: a bus to Vyoshenskaya is leaving in ten minutes, this is the last one today...

Again mysticism and metaphysics?! Intuition, creative inspiration, feelings, morality and so on?!

Again my father's phraseology!

Well, and how to solve this "duality"?! In some countries, one should give a tip; in others - never... And there., where they give a tip, - in different places (restaurants, taxis, at the hairdresser's...) - the price lists are different...

And according to metaphysics: to give a tip means to deprive a person of talent...

Well, and what to do then?! - Probably, we should allow our intuition to guide us...

Yeah., somehow the wise phrase comes to my mind, "Dear ladies, never date men who have a purse for small change..." - How true!

Stubborn? Mule? No... Baboon!

Again his word is final!

*It's so beautiful, delicious,*

*Clean, exotic, sweet, and decent...*

*Everything is to my taste,*

*I don't want quitter this place...*

Oh, isn't it a feast in time of plague...?

\*\*\*\*\*

Well, here it is... Millerovo - "... the nastiest little hole of all the towns of Russia..." Here is the church, the square, the central market, and the central puddle... In it, there are geese, not swans...

- Shall we buy tickets on the bus?  
- Come on... Which tickets....?!  
- But the bus is so small and unreliable... and the crowd that huge!  
- Come on, don't argue... Let the woman pass, please!  
Get a girl, and sit down... You are OK, and so is she...

- Now, dear, and do you want to sit on my lap...?  
Make yourself comfortable...  
Well, let's get acquainted: my name is Elizabeth, and yours...

- Tanya.  
- And are you riding to the last stop?  
- No, we'll get off the bus earlier.  
- Are you with your parents?  
- Yes. And you?  
- No., not parents... I am travelling with my husband... He is over there... waving a hand to me...  
- My parents are standing close to him.  
- Very good. So, we won't get lost!  
And how old are you?  
- Eleven...  
- Pardon?  
- I am 11, somehow I am just not growing fast...  
- You see, how lucky you are to be vertically challenged... If you were of tall stature, I wouldn't invite you on my lap...  
- And you... where to? Vyoshenskaya?  
- Yes. And you?  
- I don't know, we are going to Dad's friend.  
- For the holiday? Well, it's great!  
- And you, also...?  
- No, we are on business.  
- Business on a holiday?!  
- Yeah., some very urgent...

How convenient and advantageous to have a man in the household!

The woman... - Is it me?! Good, that not "the old lady"!

There now... I am "the woman with a child"!

No air to breathe... and it will make 100 to 150 kilometers... Almost a two hour drive...  
Smells like... Oh, what doesn't it smell... just a textbook on metaphysics!  
Antoine is over there., almost hanging on the running board, and doesn't complain still...

Almost the same age as my kids...

My God, such a hubbub of laughter and shouting drowns out the radio., though this Zhvanetsky is roaring his head off, too...

Hey mate, you'd better turn off the radio, or it'll be worse!

But with me... "With holidays the calendar no longer touches deep my soul..."

What a rare kind of a gift my father used to have - to make a big celebration out of nothing! My children often recall how they "were hiking and exploring with him..." (but in reality – they were taken for a walk outside our country cottage... just to keep them away at least for 40 minutes or so...) with backpacks, halts (in the neighboring pine forest)... and provisions (and not something like... blancmange or kogel mogel, but something like stale bread, which in our house, for obvious

- Where are you from?  
 - From the Baltics.  
 - And I can hear... you speak with an accent... It's so good to be there...  
 - And have you been there?  
 - No, but they say...  
 And you... Have you been to Vyoshenskaya yet?  
 - Yeah.., It happened when I was the same age as you, or maybe a little bit older...  
 - Do you know that Sholokhov lived there?  
 - I do. Moreover, my uncle (uncle Aleksey) studied with him at school, and was even sitting with him at the same desk...  
 - Did he....?!  
 - He did. However, Mikhail Aleksandrovich studied not in Vyoshenskaya.., but in stanitsa Kargin'skaya. And, to be more precise, he studied with my uncle in a parochial school, when the stanitsa was still a khutor... Kargin... And when in 1960 he was awarded the Lenin Prize for his novel "Virgin Soil Uplifted", he donated the money for the book to construct a new school. Now the school displays the desk, behind which, it is said, used to sit Sholokhov, and, consequently, my uncle...

- Have you read Sholokhov?  
 - Oh, sure! At our place, we have a complete set of his writings. My father almost knew all of his works by heart...  
 Have *you* read?  
 - Yes, "The silly saucy young kipper ", "Destiny of a man", "Alyoshka's heart"...  
 - Good for you! And did you like these stories?  
 - Very much!  
 - Why?

reasons.., was never thrown away.., and a boiled egg, which had been changing shelves in the refrigerator already for a couple days)... And afterwards... there were so many stories about... hedgehogs, the deer, and about the hill of ants-workaholics, and about the thickets of wild strawberries... Oh, how lucky were my kids!

I know this familiar song of yours! But I wonder, the Central Television and the All-Union Radio also broadcast with an accent?!

My father brought us, the family, to his "small homeland"... He wanted to satisfy his pride... But to khutor Gorbatov he traveled only with my uncle Aleksey, leaving my mother, sister, nephew, and me in Vyoshenskaya... He got very much upset, because that... what he had left being 10-year old, he saw the same... 35 years later... As Sholokhov described it in his novel, "a gloomy, cheerless, baldpate-like, stanitsa without orchards... among yellow sand-drifts" .., in which lived a regular Soviet millionaire...

However, afterwards my father recalled this trip also positively... And he was fond of telling stories about our traveling with an abundance of funny details to impress... For example, how he with his daughter, that is, me... was swimming across the Don... At one point, our favorite (and now American...) Alka broke in gently... with his vision of plain truth: "but Liz was swimming with a swimming ring..."

Of course, it is very noisy in here, but the man in the capital-like (or Western Europe-like?) outfit is definitely interested in our conversation... He is making his way closer and closer... But I can speak *louder!*

Now I understand why you're so smart! After his stories people become taller, broader in the shoulders; their fists become stronger and their hearts – more tender and loving...

- Well, there's... all the characters are... kind-hearted, sympathetic, though their own life is so hard...

- You are my dear! *Taa-nechka!*

And do you know what Mikhail Aleksandrovich used to say about his books?

- No.

- He used to say, "I would like my books to help people become better, have kind souls, awaken love for other people..."

- And they say that it was not him who had written all these books...

- They lie! Do not believe them!

My uncle was sitting with him at the same desk... I also heard such talks and even read that he was accused of plagiarizing... And I even asked my father...

Do you know what he told me? - Mishka used to write compositions for the whole school, and there was no one other that talented in the neighborhood...

And all his characters are instantly recognizable - neighbors, relatives... For example, Aksinya, the main character in the novel "And Quiet Flows the

Probably, it's wrong to kiss someone else's child, but I cannot resist doing it! And you smell of kindness and wisdom...

Though there no someone else's children! Only local three-Baltic ideologues can express something like, "Why should I worry about some Uzbek woman, whose children are sick...?" - And giving this after Leningrad University...

It's like he wanted to!

In his "Quiet Flows the Don" there are so many different characters... But they all are easy to understand... Sholokhov doesn't judge anyone... Neither does the reader... along with him... And it's such a rare quality in a human - to understand everyone... and not to pass any judgements!

In this regard, somehow Stalin comes to my mind (Ops! If liberal democrats just read my mind, probably they would immediately dismember my body... with a dull ax)..., who liked "The White Guard" by Mikhail Bulgakov... He read and watched it ten times over in The Moscow Art Theatre... Finally, one of his sons asked, "Why?! It is about the White Army... They sing "God, save the Tsar!"... And Stalin replied, "A patriot is not the one who is for the Tsarist "Whites" or the Communist "Reds", it's the one who loves his native land!" And it can and should be taken as an imperative!

Come on..., never listen to someone like Solzhenitsyn!

Don", reminds the reader of his mother, Anastasia Danilovna...

There's not a single khutor, or stanitsa; a steppe river, or a mound., which wasn't mentioned in "Virgin Soil Upturned" or in "And Quiet Flows the Don"... So, don't believe the rumors!

- And what happened to your uncle afterwards?

- He became chief engineer of the largest metallurgical plant in the country.

- And to your dad?

- As to him... He endured hardships of the starving time in the Don.; from here, being your age (he was 10), he brought his mother, hardly alive, and his little sister to Narofominsk (it's near Moscow); in Spassk (near Ryazan, also not far from Moscow, 300 km away, i. e. a 4-hour drive) graduated high school, then was enrolled in the Kronstadt Naval Medical School., then... the war, the siege of Leningrad... My father's year graduated the School before the appointed time.; and they were immediately sent to the front lines on Lake Ladoga as a ski detachment... They were travelling across the frozen lake under a cover of fog... Suddenly the fog cleared and they became exposed to the mortar fire... The fire was so strong that it was impossible to raise up head... They were lying on the ice for so long that the ice beneath them first melted and then froze again, meaning... they were simply frozen into Ladoga... and when the command followed for a bayonet attack, the young officers had to use their bayonets to dig themselves out of the ice, sometimes even taking skin off... After this attack there remained just a few people out of the whole their year...

In the school, my father was a company commander, therefore, when, shortly before his death, in Kronstadt, the graduates were holding their reunion party, and it was the turn to present my father's year, he stood up and commanded, "Company., the song start!" And just two of his former cadet classmates rose... And the three of them started singing for the whole of their immortal year:

*"On the seas, on the waves,  
Here today, there tomorrow.  
On the seas, seas, seas, seas, oh,*

This visitant from Moscow... definitely likes my words... He smells of dignity and integrity?!

He was also smart!

During the siege my eighteen-year old father was pacing up and down... on the edge of the front line breastwork, leaning on a stick... in hope to be hit by a stray bullet - his hunger was so great... he couldn't stand it anymore...

The Siege of Leningrad was lifted on January 27, 1944, and 21 years later (a mystical and sacred number!), on this very day, my father's first and most favorite grandson... Alka... was born... His best friend... - Such a gift of fate...

And when my father was telling about the "ski detachment," he usually, for providing greater credibility, showed an anchor - tattooed on the back of his hand, at the base of the thumb and forefinger., made yet in the Naval Medical School, in the early days of the war... - In a bayonet attack, fascists, when they saw seamen... without pea coats in winter, wearing only telynyashkas... and their sailor caps, holding the ends of tallies, silk ribbons, between their teeth... and with these very tattoos., they immediately knew - they were facing their end! They were frightened by this "black spot" as the devil by incense... Senka even came up with a poem including the following lines, "...And as the "black spot" to the fascists - A blue anchor on his left hand back! "

But during the whole war he got only one scratch on the neck and a slight contusion... It happened when he came out of a dugout for a smoke, and



*Here today, there tomorrow... "*

just of a sudden... there was a direct hit upon the dugout... All his mates were killed... My father even quit smoking... I guess, he felt guilty for those guys, who stayed in the dugout...

Another flashback... I am 5 years old... wearing a sailor suit., and my father commands me, "The song start!" - And my natural reaction comes, with deep feelings and emotions., "On the seas, on the waves"...

Somehow Alka, my favorite American nephew, comes to my mind... When he was also about five... I was accompanying to him., and he, leaning against the piano, with all his "grandpa's guts", was singing,

"...Our brides will wait for us  
to return from distant lands,  
not all of us will be back from the flight,  
We are the air workers of the fight"...

And how is he there, in America... now?! He even speaks Russian with an accent., Jewish, which, for some reason, they consider to be... and pass off as American...

As to Stan., he doesn't speak Russian at all... and even doesn't remember that once, when he was 2 years old, he used to., and even knew Korney Chukovsky's poems by heart... with big emotions.,

"Cock-the-Roach the Great!  
Sharp and loud his shout rings out,  
While his whiskers wave about,  
"Don't you worry, I shan't hurry,  
But I'll gulp and gobble you!  
That is true! Oh, too true!  
There's no hope for you!"...

I remember how they used to come to us... with their small suitcases and with their very adult-like dignity...

My father joined the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1941., and in 1941 communists had only one privilege – be the first to rise to go into attack...

He had a chest full of medals, he is my Hero!

In fact, he really was a Hero...

Uncle Feddya was, by the way, three times Hero of the Soviet Union, and my father always was there, by his side... Well, actually, Uncle Feddya was recommended for the title of Hero... But every

time something would happen, and those recommendations were whether burned, torn, canceled, or else...

Once, on their ship., there arrived Vice-Admiral Tributs, the Baltic Fleet commander... Naturally, it was supposed to regale him with excellent cooking... Fyodor Dmitrievich came out of the mess room to check if his orders were being executed like clockwork... A seaman carries a tray with dishes... Uncle Fyodor must have been quite surprised... "What are you doing....?! What are you fetching....?! Into his yap... one should throw food with a shovel!" - He said it, turned around, and saw behind himself... Tributs, in person... Sure, the Hero award recommendation letter was immediately torn to pieces right there, in front of the crew., and., he... with his unusual... funny, bouncing gait., going down the gangway to the dock... and choking with indignation, ostensibly... to himself., but loudly and publicly., was repeating, "Into his yap... with a shovel; into his yap with a shovel, into his yap... "

Or here's another story: the port of Königsberg... pilots' containers with some engines and spare parts are being loaded to be sent to the rear... Suddenly one of these containers falls off a ship, breaks open, exposing its contents... - a grand piano, fur coats and other schlock... Uncle Fyodor just goes off the rails., rushes to the pilots, who are at the moment having a meeting... He enters the hall where the meeting is being held, and sees... white cloth-covered tables with "trophy delicacies", the wine and spirits flowing like rivers., drunk pilots, naked women, i. e. wearing décolleté garments... Uncle Fyodor grabs hold of a corner of the tablecloth and pulls it off the table with all the food, Arnstadt crystal, and Meissen dinner sets... "My seamen are swelling with hunger, and you... (a very obscene word) are fattening up here..." So., how could he be declared a Hero of the Soviet Union after such an episode., such an embarrassment?! And, moreover, being a Georgian prince...

They were really very good friends... He was a captain, and my father was a navy doctor...

My father saved his life a couple of times... More precisely, saved him from being indicted by the tribunal., which, however, under martial law was completely the same...

The most memorable for me event happened... when Uncle Fedya was brought by his seamen on a blanket... No, not wounded... dead drunk... Just of a sudden comes a rapid surprise attack by aircraft and the command, "To the sea!" The ship *ONEGA* was a minelayer with 54 crew members, and it had to move through minefields... All combat officers refused to assume command of the vessel, but my father took command of the ship... He, being a navy doctor...! Otherwise... - the tribunal... and execution of his friend by shooting... It was a war, after all!

So, he was a Hero, in my understanding!

But when I knew Uncle Fyodor, he was already not the captain-lieutenant and the commander of the ship *ONEGA*, but someone... extremely important in the command of the Leningrad seaport... in a Schlafrock and a red fez with a tassel attached to the top... playing double-deck solitaire card game and purring with falsetto the aria of Ninon Tissier... "Karambolina, Karamboletta" from "The Violet of Montmartre"... in his apartment on Nevsky...

... And at his feet... an elite English dog,

(*Chappa – to admire, okey-doke...!*)

He even wrote a memoir... My father was proudly showing the book to his guests... There were only a few lines about him,

"- And why not to make another tour for the tanks?

The junior in rank... lieutenant of the medical service... take the floor... What's your opinion?"

And further on comes the characteristics of this very lieutenant of the medical service., that is, my father: "... a navy doctor by profession and practice, still more like a drill officer than a

Physician, good at maneuvering, rose and said,

- We must go for the weapon systems..."

Good at maneuvering... Uncle Fyodor... Wasn't he aware of all aspects of the word "maneuvering" semantics?! Oh, I'd better let sleeping dogs lie...

Actually my father was from the category "I would be glad to serve – not to maneuver"! Good at

maneuvering?! Or maybe... I don't understand something to the fullest extent?!

Although, I think, I come to understand... There was an incident... just shortly after the war... My father was summoned by the commander of his minesweeping unit (by the way, my father always was tall, slender, and, in general, athletic... Before the war, he was even awarded a GTO golden badge.., and... he also was a scuba diver, which also required uncommon physical training) and ordered to defend the honor of the unit in the all-around athletics before the entire garrison of the naval base... My father was about to say that after the siege his muscles were... But the commander *was* the commander, "No talking! Quick march!" To tell the truth, since his early childhood my father used to be very sinewy (or, as he said, "wiry"), that is... strong, resilient and powerful.., and so, after running, long jump, shot put, high jump, discus, pole vault, and javelin, he made his way into the lead and became the public's favorite...

And here comes the horizontal bar... and athletes must stand on the bar in a handstand position, demonstrate their in-bar work, rotation, turns, release and regrasp skills, and a dismount, in the end. So, my father jerked a few times on the bar... and stayed still right where he was... The whole gym went dead silent! (After all, they were watching their idol...) Time's up, my father jumps down, as if nothing has happened... brave... and throwing out his chest! Someone finds an easy solution and starts shouting, "Tarzan!"

After this outcry the gym went crazy with laughter... Those days Tarzan, a sex symbol, was as popular, as James Bond became later... However, this didn't bother my father much... But a little bit later... it swept through the ranks that the hero's muscles had been atrophied after the siege... This is where, indeed, the gym set up a chant, already without irony: "TARZAN! TARZAN! TARZAN!"

In fact, he really was a Hero...

I was lucky - I grew up in a "grand hospitable general's house", the doors of which were always widely open to relatives and friends, friends of

friends and acquaintances, and often to unfamiliar people from the street...

But only... my mother sometimes complained about the constant washing and ironing... But only... really sometimes... And when I was in the seventh grade (or, maybe, earlier), I assumed this responsibility...

And why do I mention this?! Oh, yeah... Though we always lived in restricted circumstances, no one ever grumbled and everyone was happy...

And my father, like any man, probably dreamed of an automobile., which, naturally, we couldn't afford...

When he began to save up money for a car and set aside 10 rubles from his monthly payment., I immediately calculated that even for the cheapest - Zaporozhets - it would take him about 20 years... And 10 rubles was an inadmissible luxury! And we did not know how either to save, or to heap money... In a word, it ended up in stalemate and an intervention of The third force was required., which actually once happened...

And in this... Uncle Fyodor was involved, and his whole family - Lydia Nikolayevna, Natalia, and her husband Vladimir!

And the history of the matter is like this: for my birthday, Nelka and Yarik presented me with a Bologna raincoat (the first for the whole school!), and instead of small change they were given a lottery ticket, which they also added to the present...

It was the lottery drawings time... It was summer, Leningrad; my mother came to the courses of continuing education for teachers of home economics, and she took me along to make me acquainted with the great culture of Northern Palmyra... We, naturally, stayed with Uncle Fyodor... The acquaintance with the culture began right there - I saw a ballpoint pen at Uncle Fyodor's for the first time, which produced on me, well., an indelible impression... Yes., and I also tried the Viola spreadable cheese for the first time., which since then always reminds me of those bright days...

On Sunday, with the latest train from Pavlovsk, after having got acquainted with the Pavlovsk Palace, the park, and our relatives along the Polish line (who lived, as it turned out, not far from these

sights), we returned to Nevsky Prospekt... There was a surprise awaiting us: a long table covered with a snow-white tablecloth, but already empty., and quite many unfamiliar people - friends of the hosts around it... We were immediately asked a question, "What do you think... really wonderful... could have happened in your life?" Mom, understanding all possible irritating inconveniences, said with her heart in her mouth, "My husband has come..." - General laughter, and someone's remark, "That's all what a Russian woman needs!"

And then another question from Uncle Fyodor, "- And who had a lottery ticket?"

- Did I win a ballpoint pen?!

- Ha-ha-ha... You won a car! The Moskvich 408!"

This new model, made according to the image and likeness of Western limousines, at that time no one had seen... Afterwards... wherever we would drive, crowds of people gathered around to touch it... I have never seen anything like this... even when the first foreign cars appeared...

And when we were leaving, Uncle Fyodor gave me that very... his ballpoint pen... Crowds also gathered around it... But they asked not to touch it, but to try it... That was such an unprecedented thing! That was such a miracle!

They say that projectiles cannot get into the same place twice... It's not true! They can!

Well, some time passed... Many people had already color TV sets, but we couldn't afford it again... Mom dreamed about it., and no one could forbid her to do it., she had the right...

So., once she, tired, was going home from school., and, just of a sudden, she saw a garbage box... with a lottery ticket... lying by... She didn't disdain and raised it... and it turned out to be lucky! It was the best color TV those days!

Involuntarily the "Moscow does not believe in tears" comes to my mind:

"- I, for example, always buy a lottery ticket to win..."

- Well, and did you win?

- Sure... a ruble... twice..."

And now I, for example., quite well understand that "lucky is the one, who won; and the one, who didn't win, is unlucky Mr. Bean!" I, sure, mean my parents! And as to me., well., so far I just provide transmission...

By the way, my father was always on the thin side., a tall, slim, handsome man... until his last days...

And even on May 9, 1989, he was assigned to head the column of veterans (by the way, he was also the chairman of the Veterans' Committee)... He was marching the first, with his snow-white cap, same snow-white gloves, and a cutlass., and then, after him... the whole column with generals and admirals moving in lines... And children with flowers were rushing to him as a symbol... After all, "fate, brother, is a tricky animal, it selects someone worthy!"

One of my first memories... I'm eleven months old, I have just started walking... I am outside... in the street... It's spring, and next to me., there's my wooden stroller... The sun is shining... and suddenly someone is obscuring it... I look with surprise and delight, "Oh, is this handsome man my father?!"

Moreover, my father was always classical and elegant...

During their last years together., each spring, my parents used to go to the holiday home "The Green Grove" in Sochi... They were always long-awaited guests there... According to some eyewitnesses, it looked like this, "Soon the suave Jew from the Baltics will come with his mistress..."

Every evening they danced, received prizes, and... my father also loved to play pool with the former Stalin's cottages caretaker and his, Stalin's, partner in this game, so popular those days...

During the New Year's Eve 1989 party my father and I were dancing... until 4 in the morning... Then, of course, we didn't know that it was our last New Year's Eve together...

My mother did not like to dance with my drunken father... Well, actually, he wasn't drunk at all; he was just tipsy... We were dancing Waltz, Rumba, Foxtrot, and, of course, Tango...

By the way, my mother never liked to dance with my father and had always thought (even during the times when the Navy officers balls were held), that their success, prizes and awards were given to them only thanks to her chic evening dresses, which she used to design and sew herself, and her irresistible looks... Only she used to have such luxurious tresses tumbling about her face and, probably, Miliza Korjus in "The Great Waltz"... But Wanda's long locks were black as pitch, really glossy, silky., and heavy...

And one of her outfits - the sun flared skirt to the floor... I inherited from my Mom (with a waist of 60 cm - and this... after giving a second birth!)

And how fantastically good my father was at dancing "Yablochko", the Russian sailors' dance...

Oh, something just crossed my mind... And I am not even sure, if it has anything to do with the topic... But nevertheless...

Alka, after one of my father's stories about how it was in the war., suddenly asked him, "Grandpa, and is it true that at war the best die first?" - "It is!" - "And how come that you....?" - "I got survived only for you to be born!"

(Meaning... "You are my favorite grandson" .., who, actually, wasn't his blood relation at all, who wasn't *biologically* related to him... Well, my father adopted my sister... and used to say that she was his favorite child... And, in my opinion, not only used to say... It was really like this! He considered her to be the most intelligent and most talented of all his three children!

And he also used to say that "there are no someone else's children", implying that your partner and his/her kids are a package deal!)

Yes, he remained a navy doctor for the rest of his life... in the highest sense of the word... He was a wonderful diagnostician... I myself witnessed it many times and on many occasions throughout my life...

But three times he tried to join the Academy... And every time, just as with Uncle Fyodor, something would happen that negated all his plans...

At a later time, after the war, my father served in the Far East, at Sakhalin... He was the commander of the Soviet Pacific Fleet food distributors' warehouses.

- And why not a doctor?

- After the war he graduated from the Quartermaster School...

- And what is it?

- It's... a quartermaster rear service... Do you know what the rear is? Well, that's...



quartermaster service is responsible for providing seamen and soldiers with food, water, uniforms, petroleum, repair parts, that sort of thing...

For the first time... he and Uncle Fyodor climbed for a bet on the horses of the Anichkov Bridge, and just of a sudden... a night patrol showed up at the place... Naturally, a dark and claustrophobic cooler followed and the rest...

The second time... Also horses prevented him from.., but this time - alive... Again... both, he and Uncle Fyodor together, disarmed a mounted patrol... Those "greenhorns" treated the veterans and senior officers with haughty disdain... Sure, they, being pickled, had a very hard time accepting this neglect...

But this is how my father used to retell the story... But in reality, probably, a Cossack's soul could not resist... when saw a horse... and remembered his colt... And something tells me... that it wasn't only that he automatically tucked his foot in the stirrup and sprang lightly into the saddle, but also took his time to prance around... When would he have another chance....?!

They were not rowdies, or ruffians, or drunks... they were just young, happy, brash and cocky... And besides, most of those, who had passed through the war, were very cheerful people... because they knew the value of life...

Probably, exactly at that time my father came up with his afterwards traditional toast in honor of "those who are at sea, on guard, and detained in the guardhouse!" However, in a gathering, quite often happened to be "right people", who refused to drink for "troublemakers"... But on such occasions my father had also a ready answer, "No need! We'll have more to drink!"

And the third time...

- Oh, we are getting off now...

- OK... go ahead... Hold on, I'll write you my address, in case you want to write, or to come to visit me... Well, here... Can you make your way through?

- Yeah... Thank you. Good bye!

- Have a nice day, dear! Go with God!

Uuh... motion sickness again... I feel so dizzy and nauseous... The fug.... and the smells... I'd better digress from... - Just think of something else...

Well, here again comes the difficulty to solve the "duality": according to the verbal etiquette, as I

know, - if someone's thought is interrupted in the course of a conversation, you shouldn't return to it... - otherwise they will consider you to be a bore, or, simply, take you for a disrespectful person... In metaphysics - on the contrary: every narrative, every thought, every sentence must be finished... - otherwise it will turn into a stone in the way of your development; and your speech, in general, will become confused and barely perceptible... Well, and then... what should... a simple mortal, inexperienced in questions of the etiquette and various cosmological theories... do?! - It is here that not only knowledge, but also *sensus communis*, is required, so that... at any given moment... the one is able to determine priorities... Though, now I have to make this choice elementarily., since I'm talking to myself... - Why should I have stones, rocks, and boulders..?! So.,

... At the entrance exam in literature, my father was given a topic, "Vladimir Mayakovsky and his poetry"... My father refused to answer, "I despise him..." And why didn't he like my most precious poet?! I think, because he was fond of Sergei Yesenin, Mayakovsky's ideological opponent and my father's fellow countryman... from his second homeland – Ryazan Oblast, where he finished high school... Thus, here we have a conflict of interests and loyalty to the principles and ideals... Or, probably., two objects that are of like charge just repel each other... So, to call it quits... I would initiate a new incarnation of Mayakovsky in my father's descendant... Karma is a bitch!

The bus crowd has thinned and fallen silent now, so silent that I wonder how they manage it. They must all be holding their breath. The Muscovite is already very close, overhanging and almost touching me... He does smell of dignity and integrity!

How beautiful! And we've got very lucky with the weather... It's amazing, here., under this very sky,

on this very earth beneath our feet... with barely moving... shambling mother and little Linka, who all the time was asking for being carried in the hands, my father..., small and hungry Petro..., was walking on foot...

But no... He was hungry, when barely alive, he crawled away to die in the steppe... and saw a gopher... Where did he get his strength from?! (That's, indeed, the unknown immensity of our physical abilities!) He made a snare and caught this gopher... The broth turned out to be nourishing and healing! Thus began his new life... Thus he cured his mother after "the cold", i. e. after a cellar in which she had been locked without food and water by the "food brigade" and "committee of poor peasants" activists...

And for their trek to my grandfather in Narofominsk, he already prepared a shoulder bag full of boiled meat... All his life he wanted to thank the gophers and place them a monument of granite in the steppe...

But I'm deathly afraid of mice...

*«There's the steppe all around,  
It's a long-long way...  
In that empty steppe  
A coachman was freezing to death...»*  
My father might have loved Zykina thanks to this song...

And how it was sung by my granny Julia! She also was a very good and skillful songstress!

*«Make me a steppe bed  
And curtain with haze all my windows,  
At the bedhead install  
A night star...»*

I wonder, why the Muscovite is wearing a white shirt... As to the suit - it is clear... so that it doesn't wrinkle...

Where to? To a congress, a symposium, a funeral, a wedding....?!

He doesn't look like Sholokhov's son... Maybe, his grandson...?

Should I ask him directly?

OK, he is! - And what comes next?

Well, then we're almost family! That's where MYSTICAL MAGIC is!

There now... khutor Kruzhilin... with a tiny adobe house where 86 years ago the Nobel Prize winner was born...

But the Muscovite doesn't get off the bus. Am I wrong?!

I see... that's the thing: he is being waited for... at the road junction... by GAZ Chaika and three Volgas...

*Black as "CPSU members' cars" and shiny,  
As new galoshes, real and funny...*

Well, he still turned around and looked at me with a strong and steady eye contact... So, we are "family"!

Such miracles may happen at the Don! – Father?! Your voice in my head?! No, no, no... - nonsense!

Here were being organized for battle the famous regiments of Grekov, Platov, Efremov..., who used to beat the Turks, the French, and all other numerous enemies, which dared to invade the borders of our native land...

The free land of the Cossacks... So beautiful... Our children should be shown this!

Hm... Here is my husband!

- Sweetie, and where are you going to?

- Las Vegas!

- May I join you?

- It's always like this... everyone wants to go where the grass is greener...

- Sure! We all seek what is better: the fish is searching for deeper water, the human is searching for... where it's better... Even according to Aristotle, all humans seek to flourish...

Look, over there., on the high bank, isn't it Vyoshenskaya?

I wonder if he remembers the words of my father, his idol, or just... the situation evoked... Although my father never lived according to this saying... How many times refused "to live a beautiful life"...

What is it: self-abasement or... just conscience? When we were leaving Korsakov, our "acquired belongings" were more than modest... – a chest of tea, which, on the sly, my father's subordinates stuck into the container with our stuff., saying, "You will remember us for quite some time...!" And that's true., more than for ten years... our guests admired the delicious Georgian tea., the highest grade., baikhovi...

However, when Yarik used to be sent for our father's monthly ration, compassionate aunties in the office used to give him butter instead of margarine... In a word, my father overused *excessively* his high position...

Unlike... his assistant, whom my father recommended to place at the head... after himself...

When the guy was back on the continent... he had a brand new shiny black GAZ-12 ZIM executive class full-size car and a well-done house (not like our self-made summer cottage built from plywood bits and pieces)... My father had served at Sakhalin for 4 years, and Pal Palych only for 2...

And from the war my father returned "very wrongly"... My friend Lyudka's father also returned from the war... He was a non-commissioned officer, a corporal, or a sergeant... Their apartment was in carpets and crystal all over...

In the apartment there was a tiny door that led to the attic, where still unopened chests were kept., I think, also with the "ill-gotten gains"... Then I did not understand the meaning of my father's words like "scoundrel" and "rogue"...

But back to my father's luxury... He made a fortune of one beer glass, one champagne glass, and two - red wine ones... always apologizing for that... He had nothing to drink vodka from... with his friends...

However, for the sake of fairness it should be noted, that the song "My father was not an alcoholic, though he thought to have a drink was not a sin..." by Mityaev is exactly about him!

Well, speaking of Sakhalin and the Sakhalin friendship... My parents used to say that this was something of a special sort... something., which could be passed on from one generation to another... For example, Lydia Andreyevna, then her daughter Elena Yakovlevna, and then Elena Yakovlevna's sons, her granddaughter and grandsons...

I remember, how, when Lydia Andreyevna learnt about an inoperable tumor..., she arrived with her

daughter (then already an associate professor in Philosophy of the Moscow State University and the wife of a professor in Economics of the same Moscow State University)... to say goodbye to her friends, i. e. us... As to me, at the moment... I was experiencing postnatal depression after delivery, and so on, you know...

In short, in the evening we were happily sitting... already tipsy (after a second, or third... bottle of God knows what...), and we were singing songs... of all the peoples of the world and the Soviet Union, including... the indigenous peoples of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands (Lydia Andreyevna and my mother met in the Kuril Islands where my mother, being an inspector, was inspecting schools on behalf of the public education department, and Lydia Andreyevna was the headmaster of a school)...

Suddenly Yarik unexpectedly drops in on us - after work... and absolutely sober... You should have seen how shocked he was! And we clearly did not have enough fuel to reach the highest notes in the second octave... But the sight of astonished Yarik brought me back to reality, and I immediately recalled that I had a secret stash - a bottle of the highest and finest wheat grade vodka... to make vodka compresses, when Varvara had a high fever... So., that's when a true warm sendoff party started, including dancing of the Don and Jerusalem Cossacks (my father's words, since Elena Yakovlevna had a Jewish husband)... and Lydia Andreyevna was dancing in my new shoes, trying to break in...

Earlier in the day we happened to be in a shop..., where, on the top shelf, I saw these velour stiletto pumps – the only one pair and not my size... Lydia Andreyevna and Elena Yakovlevna caught my hungry glance... at the pumps, which cost an arm and a leg (i. e. 65 rubles; my salary being 113 rubles)... In short, they bought me these stilettos... And, as it turned out, Lydia Andreyevna had the biggest feet in our company...

These "pumps" served me well for a long time... being my most favorite... and my only... pair of shoes almost for seven years...

- Yeah... A new bridge! When I happened to be here with my father, we were crossing the Don on a pontoon bridge... My father then gave free rein to his tongue: F... you, Nobel millionaire, couldn't you build a bridge to your own palace behind the 3-meter fence...

He is, you know, too weak in the guts...

Apparently, The Laureate heard his words...

But my father, probably, did not know about the "generosity" of other millionaires... – The-state-anthem-writer, for example...

His idol... Now... Antoine is even wearing out shoes the way my father used to... Sometimes it makes me dumbfounded at the sight of his shoes or boots... as if my father has come...

And presents to give.., he learned from my father, too...

I remember... how my father presented Wanda with a ruby parure, which cost him all his salary... I wonder how my mother managed to make ends meet until the end of the month...

Yes, the language, my father was speaking.., was very *delicious*... "The burring gang", "the callusless crowd of bastards"... His tongue was so impeccable that he could afford even creating new words in the form of neologisms and other "vignettes" of speech... When he felt like telling stories, everyone was just immediately turned on silent... - and not so much from the story itself, but from its verbal presentation... He must have breathed, as Sholokhov, enough of the Don air and spaciousness...

He liked to repeat, "I am lucky to have an angelic nature and infernal patience", frequently interchanging "angelic" and "infernal", depending on the situation...

One of the comments of my navy doctor, "She has put on some lipstick, but her stern is... in shells..." Aptly defined, huh?! And, what is even more important, elegantly and figuratively put... I would even say, upper-classy., or even aristocratically...

Or another one, "What kind of a desperate enthusiasm?! - We are not afraid of work – we will go to work without leisure; but we won't work at all, and we won't leave work with pleasure!"

Or, "Tea isn't vodka, one cannot drink it too much; from tea one can have even a flea infestation!"

Well, well.., to say nothing about his talent for spouting impromptu jokes...!

No wonder, my father was flawlessly good at profanity! I remember that after he had been operated on, one of the young surgeons asked him, "Old man, we have seen and heard here... a lot of things from the people under general anesthesia... BUT THIS.., you've beaten everyone! Let us write it down...! "

Now everyone is sitting plunged into silence... The radio sounds at an optimal volume range, and the sound quality is quite decent...

*Oh... - Father?! Again?! Mamma Mia! We are entering the bridge, and your favorite song starts...!*

*"When from my dear Havana I sailed away,  
Only you were able to feel my gloom..."*

AND YOU WANT TO SAY THAT IT IS A COINCIDENCE..?!

And how my mother used to sing this song for my father... Now she doesn't sing like this anymore...

- That's Vyoshenskaya! I hope there is a hotel of some sort here... You say that it's ten kilometers farther to Gorbatov?
- As far as I remember, something of the kind...
- Wait for me here, I'll set out to explore...
- OK, go ahead!

The left-bank, or, maybe, right-bank Don... sands, a pathless wilderness of the reedy sedges at the water's edges...

- So, I found out everything. That two-storied house is exactly... No, no, neither a hostel, nor bed and breakfast, or a guest house...
- Is it a grand hotel?!
- Very much like! Hotel! That's the Cossack blood of yours...
- Ain't I see a right hut?!
- Buses, of course, don't go to Gorbatov. We should find someone who will agree getting us there and back by car.
- Clear. If on foot, we won't be back on time.
- Give me your passport and wait for me here.

It doesn't look very promising.

It's good that my father just doesn't see all this... Doesn't see this hostelry., impoverished and shabby...

If only someone agreed to drive us to Gorbatov... Lord, please help us!

What a beautiful bend of the river... That time I wasn't able to admire the Don from here, from the high bank. I wish I could show this to the kids!

- Well?
- Everything's fine. Let's go and take a look at the room... and leave the bag.



- Here we are...! And where is the bedding?!  
- Not supposed to be. Stop being Baltic! Lizonka, don't worry, you'll be sleeping in your down jacket.  
- What do you mean?! I won't be able to lie down on this mattress even in the jacket!  
- I'll remove the mattress. You'll lie down on the metal frame. Look, it's really good, springs are made of steel... Quite a good iron bed with iron knobs...  
- Oh, yeah...  
- Okay, we may also stay outside, on the street... You will hardly like it more.  
- Clear...  
- Well, are we going anywhere?  
- We are rushing!

- Liz, no one agrees, except those two guys, and even they agree to go quickly there and back; they are in a hurry. They look, of course, scary, but we don't have any other option...  
- Clear. Lord, thank you! How much did they ask?  
- In their understanding they have jacked up the price. Do not worry, much less than we could expect.

- And isn't it suspicious?  
- I don't think so... No, of course not... Stop stressing, I'm handling it... Only they say that Gorbатов isn't 10 but 50 km away.  
- Maybe they have a different khutor on their mind.  
- No, they say that there's the only one... and not in Vyoshenskaya district but in Bokovsky...  
- And isn't it suspicious?  
- C'mon, cut it out! So, are we going or not?  
- Sure, we are!

What, we need...?! I think I should use words from the vocabulary of my father...

It reminds me of my boss, "Why are you so afraid of mice?! You *are* wearing boots!"

But somehow It sounds just same anachronistic in modern life as "being chauffeured", "an aviator" or "a gramophone"...

I remember how funny my granny Julia used to say.., "I was chauffeured around..," meaning she was driven by a taxi driver...

No, kids don't need to be here!

Somehow now this beautiful scenery gives me less delight... But once again reminds of Sholokhov, "Vyoshenskaya is a gloomy, cheerless, baldpate-like, stanitsa without orchards... among yellow sand-drifts".

And why only people... 'have no shame'?! You can't blatantly charge an exorbitant price "under the circumstances"... in hopelessly desperate situations.., and, moreover, under the guise of helping your neighbor... – Thus... how it happens "*just kind be from heart*"...

Or maybe not under the guise... at all...

Oh, I *am* shrewd, but your instinct I trust more than mine...

Of course not... Uh, well, whatever...

How come?!

How great that I'm not here by myself!

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- Good afternoon!  
- Good enough! Maybe Mademoiselle would prefer a front seat?

- To horse!  
- So, well... shall we go?  
- Go ahead and with songs singing!  
My name is Elizabeth...  
- Victor.  
- Victor... Victór? Victór Marie Hugo?

- Why... Nikiphorov..."

- Vladimir.

- Anatoly Vladimirovich.  
- Excuse me, do you exactly know where khutor Gorbatov is?  
- Yes, we exactly do! We know all khutors on the Don...  
There's only one khutor Gorbatov in Bokovsky district...  
- But my father always mentioned stanitsa Vyoshenskaya, and in his documents it was written like this...  
- And it was written correctly, in the past it was really like this: khutor Gorbatov of Vyoshenskaya district... And now Vyoshenskaya itself is of

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Well, quite *characters*... Again my father's word!  
If only Yarik were here., my Master of Sports and the Chairman of the Boxing Federation, or his sons-rangers... Though., I also know his two main techniques., as he likes to repeat, "In boxing, we have only two basic techniques: to run fast and hide well..."

Probably he meant to say "Madam"?  
Never! Only with my husband... and in the back!

How great that Antoine jumped inside an already moving train...

Again my father! His words...

And this is me!

I really like my trick in reference to someone's family name... Quite reliable and a thousand times proved to be trouble-free! But why should I know his family name? - Well, just in case... Let there be some kerosene available... in case of fire... I hope we won't need it, but let it be... just in case...

NIKIPHORov?! And what does it mean?! A mere coincidence or the sign of a situation?! Or just the Don coloring?! Okay., let's figure it out later...

You *are* burring... Very similar to, "Hello, I'm an oenologist... - Yes, we see that you are not Ivanov..." - Such an ancient anecdote., with a very long beard... long enough till Jesus shall descend., or you reign over us...

Right, don't let them relax!

I can smell threat and danger... Well, why didn't we listen to Yarik?! – Just... just because the situation is hopeless!

And I always used to write: khutor Gorbatov, stanitsa Vyoshenskaya, Rostov oblast.

Sholokhov district., and Gorbatov is of Bokovsky district... Actually, there is one more Gorbatov, but in Nizhny Novgorod oblast...

- Oh, well, okay. Um, that's fine. As long as you're sure...

- Are you in Vyoshenskaya for the first time?

- I am here for the first time, but Lizonka happened to be here in her childhood.

- Well, and how do you like it here?

- We have just arrived, haven't yet had time to look around...

- I just wanted to ask, what kind of fragrance in the air is...

- Oh, it's wormwood...

- This rather bitter type is of wormwood., and the gentle...?

- Probably, almonds, dodder?

- Dodder... And what kind of a plant is it?

- Look, over there, such an unattractive one, with small flowers... on panicles... These are, in fact, weeds, but they smell...

- So, almonds are also growing here?!

- Sure... Quite well! Right now in bloom...

And if you're so interested in what is growing, then – over there, you see, our local point of interest... The giant oak. Do you know what it's famous for?

- Buddha meditated under it...

- It was struck by lightning...

- Nope...

- Wasn't it planted by Stenka Razin in his previous life... hoping in the next one... under its shade to meet the Persian princess...?

- Nope...! Sure, it *is* associated with a legend... Tatar Khan allegedly hid a treasure chest near the tree, in the earth, and, planted an oak to mark the place... It is said, that time and again different treasure hunters came to the oak... Everyone knew that to find the treasured place one had to count five hundred paces from the oak, but in which direction no one knew...

- Probably, all virgin soil around was dug up...

- No doubt... Vladimir and I, we also tried to...

- And?

- And... as you can see...

- Ha-ha-ha...

Mmm, I see... It seems that he doesn't lie... Well, at least he doesn't look like someone who lies in the rhythm of breathing...

Shall we tell you the truth?! Then, we will hardly reach Gorbatov...

My husband, as always, is before me with his "tact and consideration"!

But I always thought that to the north from Crimea almonds don't grow., in our country... However, they did by our cottage... Strange., as it might seem, but I don't remember how almonds smelled there...

I think I'm starting to show off... Ugh!

Somehow this «point of interest» is very similar to Ilf and Petrov's *Breach*...

"Mmm" is about all I could manage in reply to this fascinating piece of information...

Though the answer is clear without any words! Well, yeah... An "eloquent gesture" towards their junker is a good indication...

- By the way, here's another point of interest – the Swan Steep Bank, the Don here just makes a sharp bend... You see, a sandy cliff towering over it? 40 meters! We call it Dizzying... Why the cliff was given such a name, no one knows...

- Probably, because someone, feeling dizzy, decided to take an easy solution and jump finally down a rock...

- Never heard about it.., but, basically, it also has another name... The Swan Steep Bank... Some people say - because swans used to live here before, and others say - because the bend of the Don here reminds of a swan-neck...

From here, one can get a bird's-eye-view of the whole flat left bank of the Don, its entire bend, and even farther... - the floodplain forests and white chalk mountains...

- It is really beautiful!

- Did you hear about our spring *The Offshoot*?

- No.

- This is our local natural wonder - a powerful spring..., and the place itself is of a rare beauty... The spring water doesn't freeze even in frosts and freezes. And on the twelfth day after Christmas, at the feast of the Epiphany, villagers go to *The Offshoot* in an icon-bearing procession... There was such... Yefim Kargin in the eighteenth century.., he had a mill and an apiary at this spring, and he gave a vow to God - each year invite villagers and priests for a prayer service at the source...

- And you... Do you believe in God?

- There might some events occur in life that may make anyone to believe that God is really there...

- That's for sure!

However.., his Montana denim suit and a pretentious hairstyle... His only drawback is a local dialect... In fact, his vocabulary sounds quite rich, but the pronunciation... Some hard consonants he pronounces palatalized and soft - on the contrary, hard enough... Everything is topsy-turvy... But, of course, the main thing is to know if he is a good human being... And as to him, it's hard to say! He has a sharp penetrating eye from which others prefer to glance away... And at the same time... evasive... and elusive... Maybe because he is sitting in the front seat and it's uncomfortable to turn back each time...

And all the same.., I won't consider it nice!

Stop being smart...! – But I can't...

As if it makes big difference... As if there are no killers with a cross on the neck...

Well, somehow again an anecdote comes to my mind... and again... not the one a lady can tell, very much like the story about Bovin.., an obscene one...

- And then, after esaul Kargin... his son continued this tradition...

- So, it's there... where stanitsa Kargin'skaya is, right?

- Yeah... They say, that the spring is so strong... that when Cossacks, for fun, threw a bull into the Offshoot, first..., it went under water, and then it was cast ashore...

And the water there... comes from the very depths of the steppe, that's why... it's very pleasant to the taste, crystal clear, but very icy... The fish, if tried to swim down the stream, coming out of the spring, always reached only a certain place, and turned back; could not stand glacial temperatures... Some time later, cold spring waters were collected in a water supply pipeline constructed here by Mikhail Aleksandrovich...

- And who built the bridge? When I was here with my father, there was a pontoon bridge over the Don...

- The construction works were initiated by Sholokhov, but were completed after his death...

- At that time..., when I was here with my father, he had just built the road surfaced with asphalt to Millerovo... Although... thanks to him at least for that much! It's good to have such millionaires!

- Well... He also founded and supported The Don Cossack Choir and The Cossack Youth Theatre; he built the sanatorium "Vyoshenskaya", the Palace of Culture, the airport...

A tourist, being in Jerusalem, decided to have his wrist watch fixed... He saw a shop window with lots of wrist watches and entered the shop...

- I'd like to have my wrist watch fixed...

- Excuse me, dear... but we only do the circumcision here...

- And why are watches everywhere?!

- And what do you want us to put instead?!

In other, *decent*, words, it means, "the owls are not what they seem!"

And if the owls just have... a crisis of identity?!

And why only... the funny jokes are always so indecent?!

And as to the cross... my father would (as always, radically?) say., "So., you'd rather put on your undies - or remove the cross!"

Such a depository for information from all over the world!

No, one shouldn't be afraid of him... - But why, all the same., everything seems so suspicious? And even his environmental awareness?!

And this Vladimir... sitting silently... It's also suspicious! One is non-stop chattering, the other - like a fish out of water...

How respectfully and lovingly! I like it...

Uh, sure, my father would be very proud of his fellow countryman and almost... "family"...

- Do you know why Vyoshenskaya is called so?

- Of course, we do! From the word "veha (milestone)", "veshka (surveyor stake markings)" that used to stand here on the big road from north to south in ancient times...

- I think there might be a different version...

Perhaps it was cropped up from the word "vezha", meaning "hut, shelter, and dwelling". In the pre-Mongol times the Eastern Slavs called so... half-nomadic felt dwellings, later known in the Russian language under the terms "kibitka" or "yurt"...

It is quite possible that in the Vyoshenskaya area the "vezhas" of the first inhabitants were located more than four hundred years ago...

- Yes, stanitsa Vyoshenskaya is an ancient settlement, it was first mentioned in the times of Ivan the Terrible.

- The Grand Prince of Moscow from 1533 to 1547 and "Csar of All Russia" from 1547 until his death in 1584... So.., both versions don't abandon the conventions of normal chronology...

- Now it is clear why it's Vyoshenskaya yurt.., that is, the word "yurt" meaning "county or town" with the Don Cossacks, the Crimean Khanate, and the Czardom of Orda...

- And where are you from?

- From the Baltics.

- And I am wondering... such an accent... I saw it straight away – foreigners! Why do you need to go to Gorbatov?

- It's my father's birthplace. He asked me to bring earth to his grave.

- Ahh...

In my opinion, the air seems electrified... and all these talks are just a lot of eyewash...

Now... deadly silence... No.., talking is much better...

Well.., Vladimir smells like pure spring water.., yeah, from the local water supply system...

And Victor?! – Alas.., like subconscious aggression of a high level... towards the world and people.., and it can be expressed as hatred, contempt, and jealousy...

Oh, right. Of course. I knew that.

That's it! It *did* produce a certain impression!

... And it explains my father's looks... - on the one hand, white bone and blue blood, and, on the other, - high cheekbones and perfectly Mongolian lack of hair growth on body... with the baby-face skin, very smooth to the touch... Well, actually, in any Russian you can find Mongolian blood...

So... the silence is getting louder, and it seems not only to me...

Yeah, we've already heard it!

Victor eyed us quite amusingly and Vladimir *definitely* strained his ears and back...

We have a lot of foreigners coming here every year... about 70 thousand... From Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Italy, France, Austria... You have arrived a little bit early... On May 24, the day of Sholokhov's birthday, the streets of Vyoshenskaya are filled with visitors from all over the world... The celebration goes on for three days... On Saturday in the streets there are lots of people, singing and dancing... On the square – there's a fair, with souvenirs all sorts of entertainment...; all guests are offered the Cossack food...; then a concert on stage, on the waterfront of the Don...; and in the evening, when it gets dark, the fireworks...

The most interesting is, of course, horse racing... Vyoshenskaya attracts riders from all over Russia and even from abroad. There's the Cossack prowess as horse riders. And what is really good... it's trick riding and cutting the vine...

And again... a dead and ominous silence prevailing...

Okay, quiet down...

Christ, Antoine, you really have no clue, do you?!

Are you kidding?! There.., the border is about to be closed any moment... What kind of celebration?! Or is it too far away from you - "too high up in the mountains and not in our region"?!

Well, why again this uncomfortable and eerie feeling that you are not demonstrating your erudition but palavering and lulling our vigilance...?! No sophistry will deceive our penetration! Never mind your eyes...

It well reminds me of Chekhov's short story "Overdone"..., the station with a very telling name "Rotten", where came... a surveyor; his journey, his cowardice..., how he frightened his coachman with his stories about his alleged cruelty..., and how, in fact, he himself was afraid of the unknown robbers and this very coachman...

*La-la-la-la... you can't imagine how scared we are!*

... But Tolik has also an ulterior motive to keep silent, and the intense slowness of his gestures speaks volumes to me...

It's crazy... And yet... it reminds me of Rubtsov:

*«I met a horse deep in the bushes.  
And shuddered I. But it was late.  
In any water lurked my fear,  
In any shed with hay...  
Why did it come to such a wild place  
Exactly at this time?  
We had two living souls inside us,*

- Do you mind if I turn on the radio?

- Yes, please!

Oh! This song is about my great-uncle!

More precisely, it is written by him...

- Oh... It has been attributed to so many authors...

- Sorry, it just slipped my tongue... But, actually, I... wouldn't want to impose my views on anyone... I mean...

Do you know that there are many different variants of the song?

- Mmm. Interesting... Well, I do.

- But did you hear the version with the words, "Farewell, the little khutor at the hump"?

- I did!

- So... this is about the same Gorbatov, we are driving to... Only the people living there called it *Humpy*...

- Uh-huh, that's great. Have you ever been there?

- No, never.

And what is also known about my great-uncle Nicholas... that in March 1920, he left with the Volunteer Army from Novorossiysk... on the British fleet flagship - *Emperor of India* battleship. And this, with some variations, is mentioned in many versions of the song,

*"And when in the morning the sun started dawning,*

*The Emperor ship, like an arrow, got still,*

*Poruchik Golitsyn, let's better return,*

*Poruchik, for what do we need someone's land?"*

And by the way, which is the most important thing... he possessed natural aptitude in poetry... So, for me personally, no further proof is needed! And the rest is a matter of faith: you may believe it.., or you may not...

- And what happened to him after?

*But so unable for a chat.  
We were two different beings,  
Although we both had eyes.  
We felt so terrible and awful,  
Though had eye contact for a while.  
I must confess – I hastened back  
To households with only sole idea:  
It's better never meet again  
In anxious places -  
For much different creatures! »*

Oh, really....?! "Poruchik Golitsyn"!

I hope, I don't sound insulting?

Well, thank you, Vladimir, I've nearly started thinking that you're deaf and dumb, and the only word I heard from you, I just imagined...



- No one knows... But he was seen in Paris, and in New York...

And, well, what kind of rank is *cornet*....? *Cornet Obolensky*... from the song... Does anyone know?

- This is the lowest grade of an officer... podporuchik in the Tsarist army., and in the cavalry – it is cornet...

- So, it happens... Golitsyn is one rank higher than Obolensky?

- Well, yeah...

- Well, that's for sure, a woman behind the wheel... I'm sorry, madam... Come on, Vladimir, overtake the car, and we'll see who...

- Well., who?

- Unisex...

- Ha-ha-ha...

- Ha-ha-ha...

- Ha-ha... Look, the sign "Humpy"!

- Well, Liz, you... don't be so sensitive!

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- Okay, where to? The guys are in a hurry., they worry...

- How awful... I also worried all the way here!

- Oh, this *is*... very good! They say., that is, "the scientific research on stress reveals," that stress has a positive rejuvenating effect upon the cardiovascular system...

- Clear... Here, perhaps, the main concern is... not to overdo... so not to become a baby...

- Look, there's someone in the garden, pottering about... Come on, ask her – it'll be faster!

- Over there., where a hut is sending a grey wraith of smoke up?

Somehow, even the genuine interest doesn't reduce the strain... C'mon, just relax!

Antoine, you know, I also try to be "polite"...

Here is the proof! And for me, by the way, as well! Because I just believed my father, his word...

Ohhh... So, you were shit-scared, as well... Yeah, same here... But let's just chill the fact out...

And what would I do here without you?!

When it gets too hot., straight away... Antoine!

Thank you, Lord, we have arrived! If they really had wanted to rob or kill, they would have done it before... Why to take so much pain going that far, especially since they seem to be really in a hurry... And Tolik is not a fool to give a cash advance!

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Mmm, that's great. Here is Meadow street... Here is Downstream street... Pardon? And where to look for the bushes outside the door to the house, out from under which the earth is needed...?!

But for my father... I'll find even Kennedy's killer, to say nothing of bushes...

Right... - fear and guilt always cause stress!

But hypocrisy is also causing stress...

Oh... well, but why *stress*?! This is just '*political correctness*', i. e. the outward manifestation of politeness, tolerance and good manners!

Sure... Okay...

- Yeah...

- Hello, could you help us...

- Why not help?

- We're looking for the house of prince...

- Hm..., the prince's manor?!

- Do you know which prince....?!

- Why not know... We had only one prince here, but two houses of his: parent's one and a son's of theirs... when he separated him... Which one?

- The son's, I guess!

- That one, look, under the hump... with two trees growing next to the front porch...

- Well, no worries..., bushes might considerably have grown...

- There's a store was first but now gypsies dwell there...

- And where is the parents' manor?!

- Burned... There's school was at first, and after it burned... But there's lowest part left... so big... not overgrown...

- Thank you very much!

- And you... who you are and from where?!

- I am an heiress...

That is, we are from the Baltics... My father passed away, he asked me to bring his native

Seriously, a perfect Cossack woman! Well., an exact copy of Aksinya!

And indeed, which?! Well, according to the logic of things., the son's., that is, my grandpa Ivan's, where my father was born and where there was a glass-paneled multi-tiered vitrine... with monograms...

Now I understand why it's called Gorbatov and Humpy... The entire locality is lying flat, like a table... and just a huge hump rises almost to the sky... Even the huge house at its foot looks like a hut standing on chicken legs...

**BUT BUSHES?! Any chance...**

*"The adventurous traveler  
Couldn't take any more!  
And within his eyeblink  
Disappeared the hut...  
And since then in the khutor,  
Oh, no one ever lived;  
Only a sad nightingale  
Loudly sings its song..."*

**And if bushes were growing at the porch, they, naturally, were also consumed by fire...  
Definitely...**

earth to his grave... That's what we are doing... implementing his request!

- See... This surely is necessary...

Ohmigod! I've had my say! So she might decide that I have arrived and for their land, as well! To restore law and order here... quickly and harshly!

Did she really believe, or is she just pretending? But what's the difference... In half an hour we'll disappear for good...

Uh, hi. Um, who is this? - There's a Cossack! With lampasses and his military cap... A graying lock of his long curled hair sprouting from the front on the side., a kosovorotka, embroidered in the traditional Cossack cross-stitch style, and his "pea-jacket" draped over his shoulders... Everything is the way it should be! Perhaps, he is Aksinya's father... Well, well... he resembles my grandpa Ivan a whole lot...

Only my grandfather., not that he was hook-nosed, but had the same slightly pendulous and slightly hawk-like nose as the Melekhovs'... As my father's, and mine, probably... And who knows, maybe also our Cossack blood was crossed with some Turkish blood... And my grandpa's and my father's eyes were also brown... However, my father's... were light brown... with a touch of green... I remember quite well "the whites of his burning eyes, bluish in their slightly oblique slits", "his curls, hard as horsehair ringlets", and "brown, ruddy skin, drawn tight over his angular cheekbones"...!

- Don't you think... we're related?!

- No... Not possible... We are ordinary and simple Cossacks... Krivoshlykovs are we...

How do you like it?! As it turns out, we are not as "ordinary and simple" as we have been pretending all the time?!

Dad, come! You remember someone from the prince hut?

- Sure... The mistress of the household was Darya, her master was Ivan...

The kids... they were five of them... I do not remember... Except the little one, Petka by name, oh, god damn you all to hell, grew smart., after he released his mother from a cooler... set his mother back on her feet... They were saying that he was caching gophers to feed her, and after... he took his mother and his kid sister to his old man in Moscow...

Six...

God damn you all to hell... – my grandfather's outburst of profanity!

I then yet realized that he will turn into something good...

And after yet he came in sixties with his older brother., Alexey he was called...

- Right, it's my father and uncle...

- Are you in honest?!

- You, Dad, manage your own business... Daddy, watch out, carefully...

- You talking to who?! Why you coddle and cosset me like toddler... Stop being stupid, Maria, or I get enraged for evermore...

- You scared me too much...

- Oh, thank you many times over! I wish you all the best., good health, and happiness...

- Well, God bless you!

- Now then... Shall we go to the house under the hump?

- Uh-huh, and where to... else?!

Look... Huh? Do you know what kind of trees these are?

- No... Let's see... I guess, acacia... And then... the acacia bushes, indeed, eventually may have turned into trees! But how to take some soil from here... Look at these brutal... rough gypsies... It'll take me a long time to explain them about my roots and requests from my late ancestors...

Oh, Dear, I want to kiss you, hug you, and hold your hand... so much...

Well, I remember this myself... Antoine, don't you push me! I understand that we are in a hurry...

OK... And these two, Victor and Vladimir, - what are they doing here?! What's going on?! I haven't noticed them...

Honey... Oh, my dear...

A Cossack woman! Oh., she reminds me of another Cossack woman... on my first visit to Vyoshenskaya... - that burly one., who was pushing her sweetheart... - a puny Cossack... - with something whip-like along that very pontoon bridge... My goodness, it is clear, they are having their "buddy-buddy"... She is chiding him just for fun... It's time to part!

*"Across the river, on the hill,  
A green forest makes noise;  
Under the hill, across the river,  
A small khutor lies..."*

And the hut., to be more precise - a country house, because... it is made of wood... and on two levels - I understand., it's a kind of wonder here... Probably the only one in the neighborhood... - out of timber in a steppe... My father would say: "Timber... Come on... Here, one cannot find... even a piece of wood to remove bits of food lodged between the teeth... "

Yes, and the "parent's" house was hardly adobe... - The adobe bricks/blocks can hardly burn...

And I can easily imagine what kind of "dekulakization" was taking place here...

But the yard, as if nothing left... As if everything here has been falling into decay for years and gradually falling apart...

- Once it is the right house, and these are the right bushes... - the rest is a matter of technique... Take off your cravat tie, or what is it called...

Here you are! Get it... the EARTH! I am just begging you: don't spill it!

- Well? Now back?

- And could we still drive up over there, to the ruins?

- For how long?

- Just for a sec...

I want to see the ruins closer...

- Liz, since we are here... maybe you'll get out of the car?

- So., there's nothing to make it out...  
Where's the porch, where's the home,  
Where's the ring, cherished for so long?  
Because everything has gone...

The house seems to have been awesome

We thought about everything, except a pail and a scoop... That is, about a proper tool and container... - very much like us! Uh, enough of Monday morning quarterbacking!

Come on... fast... while the gypsies don't see!

In the words of Sergey Pavlovich... Korolev, "It's better to do slowly and well than fast and badly - because no one will remember that you did fast but everyone will remember that you did badly"... Although., in my understanding, the best is... to do well and fast...

My house... The house of my ancestors... and I am, like a thief., stealing my earth...

Again gypsies?! – Got it!

They are looking after my past...!

MY LORD, THANK YOU! Here it is... the soil, both crumbly and sandy clay... so special...

A pinch of this particular native earth my ancestors used to keep around their necks in little bundles, tying them to the tiny icons, with which their mothers had blessed them, and to the prayer against arms, the prayer in battle, and the prayer in time of attack., beneath their underwear shirts...

And now Antoine also has the native land under his nails...!

What a strange look of Victor... As if he can kill at once... and if not for money, then just for fun!

Why? - I don't know... Good lord, I want to! Maybe, following the voice of blood?!

And why has Victor flinched at the word "the ring"?!

And noisy, friendly, truly noble,  
But now, alas, late, also...!

Look, a burrow... I guess, a gopher's... Let's get  
some earth from here, too...

Thank you, dear!  
That's it! Let's go!

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- Elizabeth, so you have come here only for the  
earth?

- Yes...

- That far?!

- Well, yeah...

- That is... your father asked you before his death,  
and you came?!

- Well, not before his death, after...

- Meaning....?!

- I have friends... psychics, contactees... In short,  
my father found me through a medium and  
asked...

- And we thought that you came here for a  
treasure chest... Like, we will get you here, then  
you kill us, will take the car., and disappear with

ALAS!!!

If the "parental home" has been desecrated, it is  
better to get earth from a gopher's burrow... It is  
sacred!

Now I have *the Don manicure*, too., with the native  
land under my nails...!

Again, a rather strange look from Victor! But this  
time, in my opinion, - puzzled...

*Mission accomplished!*

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Well, here again, dead silence...

Just some kind of the silence theater by Robert  
Wilson...

Hey, superstars, 7-hour avant-garde experiments  
of "The Blind Man of Seville" I won't be able to  
stand...

Even the radio is silent... The guys are, probably,  
afraid that I can hear something dear to me again...

Or, maybe, even the given information should be  
digested... Otherwise, why all the time they were  
hot on our heels and watched intently as we were  
digging in the ground....?!

And a strange feeling... Uh, right! As if they were in  
a hurry all the time, and suddenly stopped being...

You... Don't you push me! It hurts! I do understand  
myself that I've blurted out nonsense...

Yes, Victor, the message of your glance is clear!

Don't look at me like this! I see – no one needs the  
details! Otherwise someone can get into  
the Kashchenko mental hospital... or its local  
branch...

Now the silence is not empty, but dead., and  
eloquent!

the treasures in an overseas country... And when we heard about the ring... I decided for myself... there might be such a prince ring... that any immense treasures, in comparison with it, become nothing...

- Ha-ha-ha ...

- Ha-ha-ha ...

- And we thought that you wouldn't even get us here, you would just kill us on the way, in the remote steppe... Anyone can see off-hand that we are rich... from abroad...

- Ha-ha-ha ...

- Ha-ha-ha ...

- Well, the times *are* trying!

- And if you thought so, then why didn't you ask us to get out of the car?!

- Why didn't you get off....?!

- Well, we were in a desperate situation: either to go with you, or on foot... Probably, at night and walking in the wilderness isn't safe, either...

- Ha-ha-ha ...

- Ha-ha-ha ...

- Ha-ha-ha ...

- Ha-ha-ha ...

- It feels like you are no longer in a hurry?

- No need any more! We are already late everywhere! Well, well... one thing – to be half an hour late, but quite another – two hours late... Who is going to wait around for someone that long?! We agreed to meet with girls, stood there not knowing how to pass the time... And just of a sudden Anatoly *Vladimirovich* (are you such a big bug?! ) comes...

- No, no... Quite a small insect... We are really sorry, guys!

- So we decided to pass the time and make some money...

- Ahem, but you may easily reschedule your fun to tomorrow...

- We just met, didn't even have time to take their phone numbers... They agreed to... only when they heard about the barbecue... We even marinated meat...

- What a real bummer!

- Barbecue... sounds yummy! We haven't had a single bite to eat since morning. And yesterday our lunch was rather light...

Now the story about the giant oak finally makes sense...

Very much like Chekhov...!

They *are* cool guys! But seemed... So, my mind failed to soar to unattainable heights of insight! And thank goodness!

They are really cool: they are laughing openly! Yeah... but Yarik warned us exactly about very nice people... Nah., they are still a far cry from "very nice people"...

Strange, as it might seem, but they look quite grown up, i. e., with families and positions... I mean, they look like men of supposed wealth and position...

- Let's find a nice place somewhere on the bank of the Don's and fry the meat... We have even wine...

- Well done, guys! Everything is thought out!

- Anatoly *Vladimirovich*...

- Guys, come on... stop it, just Anatoly...

- All right, Anatoly. Well, but what are you, what are you doing?

- He... works in the Komsomol...

- Perhaps, chief of a department...

- Almost... And I am the Vice-President's advisor for the State Bank...

- Well, I saw it at once... - the bankers!

- And you?

- We... We are honest cooperators... I have a kind of a small shop... – buy, sell, and the difference put into the pocket... Vladimir helps me...

The times are right now..., especially for me, just such a successful and budding entrepreneur...

Maybe for someone times have passed! They are in a crisis, they can do nothing else, everything is gone somewhere, but not for me...

Sometimes, of course, it might happen that for a whole day I cannot sell a thing... I understand, if I gave a sky-rocketing price, made it go through the roof, for example., deciding to enrich myself at once with a single kick, but I'm okay, I'm normal., and, when I was starting up, I knew, for sure, that I'll have to work thoroughly, sparing no effort...

When I read once that it was possible... on this very cooperation easily make a hundred bucks, I was just as if struck by lightning...

Educated people told me a lot of things, when I started asking questions about the profession in detail... And I trust educated people, because I am myself competent through the roof, even though I don't have a higher education qualification, but I am well-experienced, that is, I am wise and skillful in a particular field through experience., not a single university can be compared...

In short, I multiplied this one hundred bucks by two, then by three, then by four, my head went spinning from success already in the fifth... I came to my senses and started thinking, why I am still so poor, if, as it suddenly turned out, I am so smart?

Well, I was thinking., I got stuck, to be more exact, I struck oil, now a lucky break...! If only...

Vladimir is silent again... because he is shy., and, obviously, his friend Victor tries to outshine him every now and then... And not without a purpose... the cold steel of superiority sounds in his voice... And I, as always, try to outshine my spouse... What a harmonious set of perfect companions!

You..., don't you look at me like that... What's up? I know myself what to say and what not! I suspected we were toeing the line between personal and professional, and I wasn't about to cross it...

And actually... does it really matter... what others think of you?! Well... I absolutely agree with Omar Khayyam, "Only those, who are worse than us, think of us badly; and those, who are better than us, - they just don't think of us!"

Somehow it reminds me of "Taman" and "honest smugglers'..."

There are people... whose... so-called 'private' revelations make the interlocutor's hair stand on end with horror... However, this isn't exactly the case... Perhaps, it's even funny...



from my mouth to God's ears! To scoop a lot of money in our spare time, it's a piece of cake... And why no one before has advised me on such freebies...

These are the times! But you know... I am just playing the fool, entertaining you...

Come on... Look... You see?! Let's stop here!

- OK! Very beautiful!

That's it! I get to sit here and admire...

- Right! Cooking BBQ is a man's job!

If you are engaged in cooperation in your spare time, what are you doing then in your not that spare....?!

And it is clear, you're a good guy, but "you didn't attend academies"... Or, maybe, you did... I have met *rather different* academicians...

"Liz, here is the DON!" – How strange... again my father's voice...

Um, it must have been my vivid imagination...

Uh, yeah... Seriously, I'm so happy to be here...

There was an anecdote:

"A lecturer is addressing the audience, "There are different types of love - love of a woman for a man"...

A cry from the audience, "A slide show! A slide show!"

The lecture continues., "love of a man for a woman"...

The audience shouts again, "A slide show! A slide show!"

The lecture, "love of a man for a man"...

From the audience again, "A slide show! A slide show!"

The lecture, "love of a woman for a woman"...

From the audience again: "A slide show! A slide show!"

"And there is love for the motherland... And now a slide show!"

HERE IT IS – MY SLIDE SHOW!

WE MUST SHOW THIS TO KIDS!

Oh, how fervently my father loved to bully me with his song, changing the words all the time... And, by the way, Tchaikovsky did not mind!

"*My Lizoček is so young, is so young,  
having blown seeds off a dandelion,  
Ordered easily a divan...*"

"Which got a sag, which got a sag"... - Father?!

Nonsense... It must have been my imagination again...

Well... I would sit here for, God knows, how long, passing time through myself... and endlessly enjoy... So., do I belong to the visual type... in the psychological classification of different types of individuals...?

To this type belong abrupt and impulsive people; when talking with someone, they trace all the movements, facial expressions, postures, and gestures of their interlocutor... - Yeah, it's me!

They also often give the impression of snobs; usually they sit and stand straight; they put their shoulders back and their chest forward... - No, not me, for sure!

No oxides, no dioxides here.., only spring time aromas... Am I a kinesthetic?! They are people of action; literally... they pass everything through themselves (like me!); it's hard for them to say "no"... - Yeah, it's me!

Their bodies are tight, their lips are wide and full-blooded; they speak slowly; the voice is often muffled and low... - No, it's not me!

OK, who and what am I then?! - It's like with the cosmonaut Khabibulin, who didn't remember his identifying code name...

- Earth! Earth! I am Khabibulin, who am I?

- Falcon! You are Falcon.., Dumb-ass!

A falcon, among other things, is a noble and proud bird that never attacks its prey from the back...

In ancient Rus' the eldest son was given the name Rurik - "falcon"...

And our kindred descended from Rurik, and he was not a Viking at all, but a Varangian from Friesland – a Slav to the core! We are Rurikids, so we are falcons!

Right... The human being is really the portal of entry... - a crossing point... of ideal and material forces.., which, quantum-like, have dual - material and ideal nature of time and space... And for good reason... today... all great philosophy rushed into metaphysics and metaphilosophy... in passing also plunging in theology...

But "at the bank, foam is meandering the yellow, lush lace on the green hem of a wave"...

The whiteness of the sand spit...  
The wind is flexing tops of old poplars...  
Over there a line of the giant canebrake, bending  
over the water...  
Close by... a steppe road, overgrown with small,  
inconspicuous plantains...  
And it smells of the road dust and loneliness...

*"It looks like rain... Do you think it's going to  
rain...?"*

It looks like rain... and a heavy one!  
«The vigorous rain descended in full force»...  
«Exactly above the roof, the thunder burst out... its  
fragments rolled behind the Don»...

*«The mighty Dnieper roars and bellows,  
The wind in anger howls and raves,  
It bends the willows down to the ground,  
And mountain-high lifts up the waves....»*

The Don... flows QUIETLY... But only such power is  
hidden in it, that it's better not to trouble trouble  
until trouble troubles you... Or you won't know  
what hit you! Well... it destroys, crushes, and  
grinds fates., like grain for flour., with such  
immense force... that any flour, in comparison, will  
look peas...

*"Rain, rain, hurry up,  
We'll go into the bushes  
To pray to God,  
And Christ to worship... "*

But it's another example of my father-atheist's  
"good-natured" banter...

INTO THE BUSHES... Why was it needed to take the  
earth out from under the bushes....?! To make me  
recall this childish song?! To make me realize that  
he renounced his fervent and stupid atheism....?!  
Maybe, he did not know the words of Voltaire., "If  
God did not exist, He would have to be  
invented"...? Or, maybe, Voltaire was no authority  
for him...? And Einstein either?!

If granny Julia had been here... she would have  
come out, as usual, on the porch and would easily  
have removed the clouds by her hands...

Then... all her "magic" seemed being such an  
amusement to me... But as to the clouds - it was  
really "the first necessity" to her... She used

crutches to move around.., how could she hold an umbrella over herself...?!)

So.., in the words of Nekrasov, it sounds like this, *"A smile on the lips, and malice on her mind: no holy insight— only functionality at hand!"*

Here we are... I am again strict, harsh, and wrong!

My precious and beloved Grandma... Of course, you had a gift, like your father, my great-grandfather Joseph... These days you both would have been taken for psychics.., and you would have had crowds of people lining up to be healed...

However, in your times, too, you were quite popular...

But your greatest gift, same as with my father, was, of course, WARM-HEARTEDNESS!

You used to punish me quite often.., I would say, regularly... (And, I think, not without a purpose...), but I don't remember what exactly for...

But I do remember very well... our passionate reconciliations and complete happiness after...

I remember the warm felt boots to my bed in the morning and your soft bed with endless stories about your "suitors"... And that's not a complete list! Actually, all my childhood after Sakhalin was connected with you, your care and love.., for which I wasn't able to repay you...

Although even without the manifestations of my love, you were happy and blessed... - After all, nature always rewards people for human touch, compassion and warm-heartedness...

And also probably... most likely.., your godmother prayed diligently for you...

The winter of 1907, you are 14 years old... February, your birthday, your bezhmovanie... There's a desperate need for godparents.., well, at least one of them.., but the church is empty, there are no... not only Poles in the surrounding, but any Catholics, in fact... It remains to hope for a miracle.., and here it happens!

First comes the jingle of a bridle, then a one-horse open sleigh appears, and a little, nice, and neat lady in a short fur-coat and a white angora hat slips out from it... "Yes, of course, I am honored to be a godmother, and willingly agree..."

When parting, there are hugs and kisses, a prayer-book as a present (Granny was buried with it), and

- Liz, here is a flower for you... so that you know...  
how much your husband loves...

- Who?

- Clear as day, not you... Saint Valentine...

*"What a wonderful day,  
What a wonderful stump,  
What a wonderful me,  
And my song about thee..."*

By the way, do you know that the Church doesn't  
recognize the existence of Saint Valentine?

- The Church is generally cut off from the real  
world... You know my position on the topic: any  
religion is a form of atheism and unbelief...

By the way..., the other day, I read something with  
a good phrase by Lomonosov to remember,  
"Monasticism is nothing more but a black dress  
covering fornication and sodomy, not to mention  
infanticide"...

And further on... about priests, "During any feast  
in a city or a village priests are the first drunks:  
after lunch they go to pubs, and sometimes even  
fight till blood..."

And it was pronounced... in the early 18th  
century...

But as to Saint Valentine... how cannot he exist...  
if I saw him clear as day...

- Oh..., no comment here on my part...

Well, what makes you so bitter?

a small scrap of paper, which the lady slips into the  
hand of a girl... "This is my last name. If you need  
something, find me, I can help you... Well, I'll pray  
for you! Go with God!"

Perhaps, that is why when someone was leaving...  
granny Julia used to say, "Go with God," ignoring  
the atheistic times and views...

And on the scrap, indeed, there was a name...  
Nadezhda Krupskaya!

By the way, Granny, I remember quite well the last  
fan of yours – the general from Leningrad, with a  
four-bedroom apartment on Leningrad's main  
street, Nevsky Prospect... You were 85... 86., or,  
maybe, 87....?! He asked you to marry him... And  
you turned him down and explained to me, "And  
what shall I do with this old fart?!"

Yeah., you never experienced a shortage of  
suits..., but, nevertheless, you chose my grandpa  
Peter (Könnusaar Peeter, Davidi poeg)... – a fiery  
redhead... 2 meter tall Leibgarde who could easily  
break thick metal chains with hands...

In fact, you made a very harmonious couple: you –  
an exalted roly-poly, and he – a sedate and wise  
Hercules... No wonder they called you Fat  
Margaret and Long Herman...

By the way, he was also a Hero!

Some of the neighbors ratted out: suffice it to say  
that he is a foreigner... but, moreover, he has  
a Maxim gun hidden in the attic... – They came.,  
didn't find the gun... but my grandfather got  
his 25-year prison sentence... Then the war  
followed, a penal battalion... and rehabilitation  
afterwards...

And, sure thing, I do agree with the sages: the end  
is the crown of life!

You passed away, as a saint, peacefully in your  
sleep., "after washing your feet in the evening  
before"... It was 17:17 on the clock (that is, two  
excellent marks for your life!)... In your will, there  
was only one point... and, moreover., - not in  
writing, but orally - that at your funeral people  
would have fun, sing songs and dance...

Since you had left, so, for us, unexpectedly., we  
completely forgot about it all... But it happened  
involuntarily exactly according to your will...

- I am just thinking... And some thoughts may be really bitter...

- Well, you... you'd better decide to get better instead of bitter...

- Ha-ha-ha...

- "It looks like rain... Do you think it's going to rain...?" I had a talk with the guys and we decided to give our barbecue the final 'finish' in our hotel...

- How come?! Shall we make a bonfire in our room?! Although... this hotel deserves to be set on fire...

- Let's go!

- OK!

When my mother, during the funeral feast, removed black moiré fabric from mirrors and was about to re-let the pendulum of our Big Ben, it turned out that there was no need to change time on the clock-face... At that very time it was 17:17... And your favorite son Bolus exactly at this moment was getting out of his pocket... a birthday card to his wife - aunt Mary, whom you, to put it mildly, did not like much... (You used to have such a quality... And I really don't know whether it is a virtue or vice: to keep the fig in the pocket...) All your congratulations and wishes were quite standard... Except... On the card., there was an amazing plant - *Amorphophallus titanum*... In short, this card served as a trigger for the modality of the funeral feast... There were a lot of people and they all had something to recall...!

Of course, Granny, you were an absolute hoot! Your "singing repertoire list" alone speaks volumes..,

*"And Saint Gabriel to heaven once denounced,  
That Saint Isaac became morally corrupt:  
Ignored authorities too much and drank himself  
completely blind,*

*And there was yet to say even more.*

*Over the cabinet, cabinet once,*

*Over the cabinet, cabinet, twice,*

*Over the cabinet, cabinet thrice – even more..."*

And the reaction of the people, uninitiated in the "cult delights", usually was as follows, "Julia Josephovna, you believe in God, don't you..."

Somehow it also comes to my mind, as once pan Kazhemish came to visit you... looking so pretentiously noble... with a hat and cane... Naturally, he rushed straight away to kiss pani Juliana's hand, like a la-di-da someone... And you blurted it out, "Come on... please, don't... I am just out of the toilet..."

I remember two rows of your snow-white teeth while laughing.., your fashionable glasses, your beautiful broderie anglaise.., frills and ruffles at the collar.., and your... always carefully arranged in waves... silver hair...

Granny Julia, I *do* adore you as much, as before...!

Well, here... It is already raining from above, and from below, and from all sides, and randomly... That's how, as it appears, the Don land "is sweating with rains"...

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- And where did you get the frying pan? And the Primus stove?

- It is not a Primus stove, it's electric...

- Bad luck girls, missed their chance opportunities!

- With the barbecue?

- No, with the Cossacks!

- Ha-ha-ha... And it's true! Well, that's it... Shall I pour shots into glasses?

- And will you be in shape to drive afterwards?

- But we have nearly arrived... So, let's drink to our meeting! Well..., Anatoly told us lot about your father... He was a man of dignity, grace, and integrity! Let's drink to his memory!

- Oh, the barbecue is so delicious...

- And when did your father leave the Don?

- In the famine of 1933, when collective farms were ordered to hand over all the available grain, including the so-called "seed funds"...

- When Lazar Kaganovich headed the agricultural department, established under the Central Committee of the VKPb (The All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks), actively guiding the organization of MTS (the machine and tractor stations) political brigades and state farms... As secretary of the Central Committee and head of the agricultural department in 1929-1934 years, Kaganovich was directly managing... the fight against organized kulak sabotage of the government obligations... In 1933, Kaganovich personally led the campaign for the compulsory

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A luxury hotel! There are even toilets down the corridor! Though the water is frosty, but at least, now I know exactly, clear as a tear., and, by the way, really delicious...

The entire floor smells pretty much of the barbecue!

But it looks very antediluvian... That's what progress is... Even this electric stove looks already antique... But what is coming soon... Soon the machine will not only replace the human, but also will get the status of a natural person... Nah, the machine cannot and shouldn't replace the human... And if it were possible, the Creator would have sent... to people on the Earth not Christ, but the terminator...

Cheers!

The pause lasts too long...

You cannot say the same about the wine... But as Yarik loves to repeat, "Even vinegar, once you've gotten it for free, tastes sweet"!

What?!

Oooooooh, my God!

Booooooring!

withdrawal of all stocks of grain from the peasants, which caused the hunger of 30s.

- Hey, Commissar., we know about all of this...

"Empty are our lands of Cossacks,

Fields have overgrown with grass,

Crows over the stanitsa quackle,

Poplars have become too sad...

They have taken all: the plow and chest,

Clothes, meat and fruit,

Turned good soils into a desert... -

Oh, these commissars and Jews."

Well, and your farther... just being 10... on foot... and reached Moscow?

- No., he walked only as far as Millerovo. And in Millerovo some railroad engine driver helped him climb up with his mother and younger sister into a freight train with coal... in the right direction... My father always said with emotion, how grimy they were... "And just the teeth were gleaming pretty white brightly"...

- An aristocrat...

- An Aristocrat is not associated with white teeth, and even not with the origins... Aristocracy - it is a moral and ethical category...

- And genes, too...

- Then, I think, and a miracle...

- It's a gift! By the way., what presents do aristocrats usually give to each other?!

- Aristocrats?! I don't know...

- You, for example?

- Me?!

- Yes, you... Do you remember what you were given on your 18th birthday?

- Of course, I do... On my eighteenth birthday, my parents presented me with the Great Soviet Encyclopedia... in 30 volumes; and on the title page of the first volume, my mother wrote me her congratulations and wishes (such a kind of a life program)...

- And do you remember it?

- Sure!

- Can you..?

- Sure...

... You love Lermontov's and Pushkin's poetry,  
Mine you consider vulgar be;

Stop rinsing my brain out... - Father again?!

What a dizzying erudition... from Huckleberry Finn to just "fuck you...!"

Oh, my God, you should hear it!

Here it is, the common people's interpretation of history! What a subtle psychological approach... - very democratic, very much like the workers' and peasants' style... Very much like... painting with a brush against the fencing panels...

Um, yeah... Isn't it a miracle, that at the age of 66, having survived two terrible hungers, he had a smile of a Hollywood actor., and visited the dentist for the very first time shortly before his death... to fix a small cavity hole....?!

See, that's the other thing... It's a clan, traditions, and knowledge... handed down from generation to generation...

Initially aristocrats were elected., and they were the best... Afterwards, nobility could also be acquired for merit. And the higher was the title - the more merit to the fatherland was required... And as a result: more weight - a better fate...

So, aristocracy is responsible for the fate of the fatherland... and this notion includes freedom, independence of views, and integrity...

And, of course, no monopoly on truth...

Oh, then immediately... it includes the historical aspect, the geographical one, plus social stratification and epistemology., "and horses, and people" ...

And what about intellectuals?! - Yeah... especially with the attribute "Soviet"... It's the same as the aristocracy with the attribute "bourgeois" ...



*But you, please, understand that vulgar is  
The one, who someone else's thoughts repeat.  
Own words and own deeds...  
You always do everything for the sake of duty!  
Be happy, modest!  
Study well!  
Be smart!  
Be healthy and live long, please!*

*But you remember also:  
There lived only the one who had formed around  
the memory of himself.  
Let it be a verse, a story,  
Or an embroidered towel, or a tree,  
Or just a bench in the thick bushes,  
Or a sand box for children in the sunshine to play  
free;  
Or, maybe, a big factory, or a plant,  
Or a bridge across the river, with which they will  
remember you;  
Or, maybe, (Who knows?) you will sow the seeds  
That will produce a profuse harvest  
Of peace and friendship between the peoples of  
Russia and the East.*

*Work hard, learn, dare and be aware:  
Everything what's done is left behind to the  
people!  
And you have lived your life... not in vain!*

- Well! It is cool! Not something like a dress... or earrings... But whole 30 volumes.... Well, well..., it's like a whole library...

- Well, my parents also presented me with a dress, but not on the eighteenth birthday... As to earrings.., I don't wear them.

And as to the volumes.., in the beginning they were not 30 at all.... My parents presented me with a subscription, and in 1972, when I turned

It's the same as soy chocolate or instant coffee, which cease to be... the essence by the definition of the attribute...

However, I know only too well that living life with dignity, grace, and integrity..., i. e. adherence to moral and ethical values, is more important than just being an aristocrat... - Oh, come on, this *is* a fresh thought...

We, aristocrats... Yes, now I cannot reject the fact that easily!

But... as Stalin used to say, "Aristocrats... And what came out of you?! - Nothing! You turned into waiters and taxi drivers..."

Yes... but, in fact, the mentioned values are closely connected with the concept of spiritual aristocracy... or, rather, the sense of dignity.., inner strength, equity, loyalty to own roots, and the feeling of responsibility for the family and the homeland...

That is... patriotism?! - No.., patriotism – it's... when there are no beggars with outstretched hands and hungry abandoned children... and old people...

Spiritual aristocrats are placable and easy to appease..; never spare themselves, knowing that the feeling of being hurt is the lot of weak people... Well, it's impossible to hurt and humiliate the one who... always and everywhere, in spite of everything.., preserves the sense of dignity...

Spiritual aristocrats never betray themselves and are afraid of nothing... – Why should they.., if they are sure of their righteousness?!  
And their huge inner strength, by the way, turns into even greater modesty...

Spiritual aristocrats never pretend... For them... no need to behave so as... to make it appear that something is the case... when, in fact, it isn't.., no need to play games and simulate feelings, emotions or... qualities...

Well, yes, I forgot about bravery, courage and intellect.., or rather mind... Because the difference between intellect and mind is the same as

18, only 7 volumes were published... The last volume was published in 1978., in the year when my daughter was born...

And by the way, the 24th volume was in two books... So, it's not even 30, but 31!

- It's still... great...

- Agree!

- And why don't you wear earrings? Aren't these earrings you are wearing in your ears?!

- These are ear clips...

- What's the difference?

- Well, earrings represent lower class chic...

- And what... did you read them, or did they... decorating the apartment... just collect dust?

- And what do you think?

- I think you read... And what present did you get for the birth of your daughter?

- What my parents gave me – somehow I don't remember..., but my husband gave me an explanatory dictionary of the French language... His friend could get it right from an international exhibition of books... It cost a lot, an awful lot! But, most importantly, of course, was its quality... At the exhibition, it won second place! Nobody had such a dictionary... When someone needed something specific, they turned to me...

Probably, therefore my daughter started speaking French first, and already afterwards Russian...

- Well... You mean... she really speaks French?

- Well, yes... She's bilingual.

- What does it mean?

- It means that she is fluent in two languages.

- And what language does she think in?

- She thinks in the language she is speaking right now.

between a philosopher and a thinker, scholasticism and science...

And yet... a spiritual aristocrat, unlike me, will never preach to others... He will deal with education, bringing up, but he will never teach others how to live...

Yes, but it's my profession! – Come on., stop ringing in my ears! Be engaged in your profession then, and not in "setting others on the right path of life"!

Yeah, and clips – some upper class mannerism..! My Lord, why... after all my talks about aristocratism and dignity... this snobbery and these ill-mannered... got out again..?! I am *sick and tired* of it!

Now everyone is silent... No wonder..., they feel uncomfortable for me... And especially Antoine...

Oh, My CREATOR! No., not this way... it is necessary to address the right body... (After all... we don't buy meat from a grocer!)

*Saint Mary of Egypt* - the patroness of all penitents, you yourself... know how hard it is to get rid of the vices... Help me, please, get rid of wrong pride! I beg you!

Uh., now I feel much better... THANK YOU!

Father, I think, I come to understand why you sent me so far away... literally and figuratively... "She was née... but has become..." - meaning, lost the title...

With the title... - no title... The Cossack in the coach., the one with his grandson.; and the Cossack from Gorbatov; and the aunty... with a snow-white lacy headdress on her head - they held themselves with dignity, grace, and integrity, didn't they...?!

I remember how once... Antoine and I, in the forest., but not far away from the city., ran into a homeless guy... in a small valley... We could see him easily, but he couldn't see us...

It was late in the afternoon, the sun was going down... the quiet *Radio Mayak* music was heard from his (probably pulled out of a garbage bin) antediluvian transistor...

- Do you have only a daughter?

- No, my younger son is also available.

- And he is also... well, as you said... bi... something?

- Bilingual?

- Yeah...

- No... He understands French, but doesn't speak yet... I was reading for PhD in Moscow... when he was a little boy and learned to speak... Not only that he rarely saw his mother.., but when "the strange aunt" used to arrive... she was speaking something alien... And one day he burst into tears saying, "Mommy, do not talk to me in a strange language!"

- Well... I've never seen or heard children babble on like that... in a foreign way...

Aristocrats...

- Ha-ha-ha...

Small fire sparks were showering up, and, close by, on a stump.., there was spread out and smoothed a thoroughly crumpled newspaper... Right on it, on a scrap of foil, there lay a little piece... of butter, or margarine...

Next to it, there was a can with something someone couldn't finish.., a half-eaten piece of black bread, someone had thrown away... It was neatly cut into consistently even slices... And everything looked so appetizing and delicious in the rays of the setting sun...

And right there, a dog - a German shepherd (and a dog of this breed won't choose just anyone as its owner) - was sitting patiently and with dignity...

The owner in a telogreika (it was our, pretty cold, spring...), under which he couldn't conceal his native-straight back... and under which a carefully buttoned up shirt was seen.., was thoroughly baking potatoes in the fire area...

And there was so much comfort and space.., safety and tranquility.., reliability and confidence.., generosity and life satisfaction.., dignity and gratitude to the universe...

And involuntarily the mysterious phrase of biblical truth came to my mind, "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him!" In other words, if you think you are rich, you will own the world, and if.., no matter how much you do have, - you think that it isn't still enough... - Well, then it's like in the *Jack Frost*...

Oh, well, I forgot about humility... - no dignity without it...

We were standing and admiring the sunset and this scene.., trying not to stir it, - we did not want to disturb this WORLD and PEACE...

Or those two.., that couple in the city, also homeless... HE and SHE - of uncertain age and incomprehensible degree of sobriety...

She was sitting on a fence ledge... with plastic bags, packed full with empty bottles and some other also useful stuff.., and he was hastening his step to her.., hiding behind... a flower, an oxeye daisy... - And why should she read her love fortune on a daisy?! It's clear that he loves her...

- OK, well, you were talking about how your father found you through a medium... And I also have a story to tell you about a miracle... No one believes!

I served in the Far East...

- Oh, I spent my childhood in Sakhalin, too... My father served there in the late 50's...

- Well, then you know what nature there is... Only the scent of lemongrass means a lot... But the story is not about this...

I am keeping watch over, admiring all this beauty around..., and just of a sudden I see a strange object... - a huge cigar-like something with such a truncated right circular cone... I come up to it 15 steps..., and it makes the air... tinted glow in orange... Getting nearer..., I feel like I might just burst inside...

And I know well what... infrasound pitched 7 hertz is... I immediately figured out that it was exactly 7 hertz or about... And this frequency can kill any living organism...

I took a few steps back, the feeling passed...

I went forward again..., and again I felt myself beginning as if to burst inside...

Then the sun came out... And, you know, the rays of the sun... were completely being absorbed by the surface of this thing... And there, where the rays were falling, as if something like "emptiness" was being formed, that is, like a "black hole"...

I just got scared and ran back... This thing... remained sitting... I tried again to move forward, then back... And this way a few times...

I stayed there, by the thing, no more than 15-20 minutes in total...

Suddenly it was lifted 2-3 meters high off the ground, and straight away it jerked, like a shell, and went vertically upwards... At that time I was only 20-25 steps away from it, but I had no sense of a shot... There was no sound, there was no shock-effect, although its rate was as if of a released projectile...

I stayed there for about 5-10 minutes..., and completely forgot that I was standing guard...

I was shaking, but there was no fear, no more, though I felt bad...

I wanted to check the time, looked at my watch..., but the clock-hands were melted... Later I took my watch to a watchmaker, he opened it... and also

THESE ARE... SPIRITUAL ARISTOCRATS KNOWING WHAT DIGNITY, GRACE, AND INTEGRITY ARE! RIGHT!

So, this is what my childhood memories smell of! Not of the lemon..., but of the lemongrass... What did Erwin Creed say about this...? "If the scent had an image, I would say that Russia smells of black tea with lemon, which the Emperor drinks..." Then Sakhalin for me smells of the lemon grass and tea with sugar and citric acid... (Because in my childhood there were no other vitamins!)..., which née Princess... drinks...

And, in fact, Russia smells (as also said a Creed, but Oliver), "of something cold and hot, luxurious and simple, invigorating and intoxicating... – that is, of aristocracy"...

Humph! Was that so?

Wow... Is he lying?! - What for? Why?! Well, just... to make us interested in... – Come on... He is so little interested in someone's interest...

It turns out that I'm not the only one... such a weirdo... Welcome to the club! Uh, well, we are many!

Wowww....

the whole mechanism inside the watch was first melted and then frozen... Here, look... For about a month I felt crappy... I have been unable to sleep ever since...

- What do you mean?!

- Oh... I just go to bed, pretend getting asleep..., but in reality just stay restless...

- And how long has it been going on?

- For 12 years...

- Well... And I had also a meeting with aliens... My friend and I, we were getting ready for our university entrance exams in my parents' country cottage... We were alone, and it was The White Nights season... It so happened that we decided to have a swim at midnight... So we went to the river... The moment we were passing through the gate of our summer community... We just made a few steps and saw... something at a distance of 50 steps away.., which separated from the woods and was moving toward a lonesome tree... slanted at an angle of 45 degrees... - black, without a head... like this... in profile... long arms hanging loose at the sides like... a dead man's... Of course, we were scared.., and offhand rushed back to the gate... We couldn't get through the gate together... The fear paralyzed all common sense...

We made fast to the cottage, hid in the parents' bedroom (it was the only "safe enough" room.., that is, with the only small window...), and were sitting, and shivering...

And what happened after.., we didn't remember anything... We didn't remember where and how we got asleep, what happened the next morning, how we both returned home in the city... We didn't remember anything...

For a long time we believed that, because everything happened at midnight, when the dark forces go on a binge, it was a ghost... And only later, when my friend already studied in Moscow, we got a lecture by Siegel, where he described such meetings with aliens...

- And who is Siegel?

- Siegel? – A Soviet astronomer, mathematician, at that time he was an assistant professor... at MAI (Moscow Aviation Institute), ergo a quite reasonable person.., the first scientist in the

It is true...! Oh, really? How interesting...

Oh, holy moly! What the hell is that supposed to mean?!

Is it really possible?! But, actually, why is the story worse (or better?) than mine, about my meeting the aliens....?!

Actually, no one believed us... Yarik was frankly cackling with laughter and fooling around, "And the dead... are standing along the road with their scythes... slanted at an angle of 45 degrees..." And Varvara used to ask with hope, "Mom, you don't tell anyone about this, do you?"

Okay, enough confessional for one day!

Soviet Union, who began the scientific study of unidentified flying objects...

- Well... Go ahead, Vladimir, make a toast., wish something...

- Okay... Let's drink to peace in the soul and tranquility in the world!

We should go... We promised the administrator to stay until eleven and to return the stove with the frying pan still today...

- However, since then I have one more quality... I can turn into a snake...

- A very useful quality... I would say...

- So, Vladimir, get it all to Aunty Sassy... and I'll give this house its tidy...

- Let's go, I will help...

- Elizabeth, I'm looking at you... – you a normal woman... What the hell you need the man for?!

- Excuse me?

- Be quit of him!

- What about the kids?!

- Better no one, if like this one...

- What? What do you mean? How do you know this? Why?!

- You're asking me? I can see this! A traitor! Flee from him!

- Well, here we are... Complete order!

- So... We'll go then... It was nice to meet you... OK, Elizabeth, here's my telephone number., if you feel like getting rid of the gypsies, or... returning the house, or the land, I'll help you... I've got some connections... That is, we'll do it at its best!

- And what about a guilty conscience?

- No guilt., it will share in!

Vladimir... That's it..!

A pregnant pause this time, and everyone thinks about something special to himself..!

Yep, it's nice to have sensible people in a gathering...! And reliable... such as Victor's Sancho Panza...!

Well, it's way over the top! It is a case for... Kashchenko... By the way, we didn't drink much at all...

Again, silence... And there's nothing to add... Actually, it's none of our business, that's for sure...

Tolik, huh? What do you mean?! It's sinful... laughing at things we should be crying about...!

It is clear, he needs to have a bowel movement... and to square up the bill...Or, maybe, he did when I was tasting and testing the local water...

Are you serious? Are you suggesting... yourself instead? Ha-ha-ha... Sorry, dude, - not tonight!

It was one hell of a session... And what are we going to fuck with you about?! I'll get bored with you quite soon, and you won't ever understand me...

Here we are...! And I used to seek guidance from different psychics... in the hope of finding out whether he was lying to me or not; whether he was cheating me or not...

Well, well... It seems that you are not that simple, too, Victor..!

What's that?! My moral hangover?!

- Guys, thank you!

- Thank you very much! Well, hold on a sec, and here is... our address and phone number, you are welcome... at our place, abroad...

- Have a good journey back home!

- It was nice to meet you!

Ha-ha... It makes me willing to ask, "Do you live according your conscience or the law?" - Yeah., to get the answer, "- According to the situation!"

No! This time I'll keep my fig sign... in my pocket... They *are* good guys, after all...

And what if we move house here, return to my roots... - Well, no... We have refused to go to Atlanta... and to Moscow... We have decided to stay with also our... hungry, screaming stupid things, people... There's also my native land... I was born there...

And the graves of my ancestors are there... of Grandpa Peter, of granny Julia, of my father, of granny Daria...

When granny Daria came to our place to die., in those days, there was only one medicine for this terrible disease - morphine... Sometimes granny was lying sleepless and motionless all night long... although she experienced Tantalus' torment... those excruciating pains... She didn't want to cause trouble to my parents (because in the morning they had to go to work!), and to Yarik, and to me (because in the morning we had to go to school!)... How can I leave her grave?! No! Never!

It also reminds me... how shortly before granny Daria's death her offspring - four sons and two daughters – got together to show their affection to their mother and to say goodbye to her... My father was a younger son and, so, in 1962, he was 39... That is, all of them were very mature people... But nevertheless, the eldest brother, Matthew, tied a leg of the most respectable one, Alexey, with a rope to his bed... In general, there was a lot of laughter... and funny, harmless jokes... with reason and without... among themselves... to entertain the family and their dying mother...

And she, in a weak voice, overcoming the unbearable pain., still with a smile was admonishing them, "Stop being hooligans! I will stand up right away and I will punish all of you! " Almost according to Solomon's wisdom: find out who is right - who is wrong, and punish both!

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Well, it's really good that I have taken this down jacket... Now it's quite handy!

- Shall I close the window?
- Yes, do, please... It's not summer., right?
- Exactly, Liz, that's exactly right! Well, shall we... sleep...? I'm so tired of hovering over you all the time., protecting you first from the gypsies, and then from the local frisky Cossacks... Nighty night!
- Nighty night! Sleep...

OK... and the room looks pretty good now: two windows, two tables, two chairs and two iron beds... even with metal frames and springs, made of steel... with iron knobs... In a word, quite a *double suite!*

And it's true, you *are* tired... But what would I do without you here?!  
I am also... endlessly tired...

How are my kids there, my effulgent little ones...?  
- Sleep, my friend, sleep! The morning is wiser than the evening!

We have already white nights... But here it's pitch-dark outside: you can't see your hand before your face... Good, that there's this outdoor hanging *lantern* of the moon... – It seems that I have been imbued with the local atmosphere and have absorbed an atavistic sense of antique values... What an incredibly beautiful..., spring-like openwork design of trees... Very much like Le Corbusier...

I wonder, what is trilling away so loudly...? –

*"Have you ever heard the blackbirds sing?*

*No, not those blackbirds, not feral ones,*

*But blackbirds" –*

*The wizards of the steppe, aa-aah...*

*"The singing elect of Russia"... –*

No, it's certainly not... blackbirds... Night...  
Nightingales!

And it's not surprising any more at all... that my father loved to listen to songbirds... He even used to get up at four or five in the morning for this purpose...

If he was at home, he used to open a window, and if in our country cottage – he used to go out into the garden... Sometimes he even echoed the birds, or entered into dispute or argument with them...

And owls are hooting... – Now, being an expert in the field., I can tell it for sure...

Only... for, god knows, which reason... anxiety and fear have returned... Meaning:



"While you trade – you celebrate;  
Having done - tears come..."

I have a strong feeling... there's nobody apart from us... in the whole "hostelry" - we are alone... - I did not see or hear anyone... Well, except "Aunty Sassy"... And was it she...? Or maybe a werewolf...? The house is seemingly abandoned., miles away from anywhere... The place is godforsaken... Basically, this place is very unusual... frightening... Vyoshenskaya is far away and Millerovo is even farther... And you can cry and shout., no use... - no one can hear you scream...

By the way, the moon is full... and during the full moon... in an abandoned house... anything might happen., according to an undisputed classic in the horror genre.: from an abandoned unmarked grave a corpse rises... and, for a start, knocks on the last house in a village... like here... And then it starts up...

OH! - Not a knock, but a hard blow! Is it... the front door... downstairs...?! Has someone slammed the door in a fury...?! MUM...

Come on... – It's a belated "guest" coming back after party-party... Well... no party-party here... It's wilderness... impassable...

Yeah, all my thoughts are just hallucinogenic... nonsense! In a word, stupid and weird stuff...

Shall I wake up Antoine?! - No, let him sleep... Enough with him... But... it's terribly frightening... - Come on, it's a thought, thus IT CAN BE CHANGED...

Wow... the moon is rolling along the sky... Or, vice versa, the moon is hanging, and the clouds are moving... And the stars are flying just like UFOs... Hasn't this Victor really slept for so many years?! Well, no, it's impossible... just wanted to impress, for fun...

But the watch?! – It's more difficult to explain or ignore...

But about the snake he... was making up a story, for sure...

- Tolik! Tolik!  
- Yeah?  
- Can you hear the hissing... of a snake...  
- Come on, which snakes... Everything is closed, the second floor... Which snakes...  
- Do you hear again...? So., do you hear or not?!  
- Well, I do... We are just dreaming...  
- What do you mean...? Remember Victor...  
- Stop saying stupid things! Come here, now I'll cover you with my body... If the snake feels like biting, it will bite me... But it won't feel like... Come on, sleep!  
- Don't do it, it's hard to breathe like this...  
- OK, I am here., close by... anyway... Calm down, sleep!  
And if there's a need... to bite a snake, wake me up, don't hesitate...

Oh Mamma Mia! The hissing... of a snake... so insolently loud, enticing-tempting-alluring-enveloping... and with some mysterious meaning... An "induced" wraith?! Is it...

Ha-ha-ha... and started snoring peacefully... Antoine...!  
But it's not scary at all! What a new and unfamiliar feeling...! I AM AFRAID OF NOTHING!

And it's true... As they used to say... "You cannot be sent beyond the front line!" That is, there's nothing worse than death... And I am not afraid of it anymore! Moreover, I'll be able to see my father...

- Sca... rrrry...

Not sca... rrrry...

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- Liz, good morning! How did you sleep?  
- Like a log! I fell asleep in mid-word...  
- That's good... I've already been at the Don. The morning is delightful – the way you like – gloomy and damp, and our breakfast is awaiting us in Millerovo... Only., let's go out on the high bank of the river... near the Sholokhov's house... The most beautiful site!  
- But you... don't fool me around with your evasive talks! Did you hear the hissing at night?  
- I did, but what comes of it... And yet... there were owls hooting outside...  
- But that wasn't outside., it was here, in the room, under the bed., and under the table...

Yeah, he knew which side his bread was buttered on! Again my father's words!

- Well, it was, and so what?! You know, I don't like all this nonsense and try to stay far away from it...  
Get ready, You... whim... whimsical Liz!

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- Well, how do you like it...? Here is the Don!  
- A complete delight! You know, I would like to erect a monument here...  
- To the gopher?!  
- No, to Sholokhov! But you know... very unusual...  
A stallion with a rider, who is lifting in the stirrup...  
No, better... - Grigory Melekhov is spurring his reared up stallion to speak to Aksinya, who is coming up to him, carrying a shoulder yoke...  
Her flat, embroidered silk cap flames on her heavy knot of hair...  
Or no, better... her head is wrapped into a cobweb of a lace scarf made by hand with thread wound on bobbins... in an open web-like pattern... And she is wearing a silk Basque shirt with narrowed sleeves and... an apron over the wide skirt with ruffles or, in other words, with frills...  
- Quite nice...  
- With many messages...  
- Look... here comes our bus! To horse!

- Farewell, Vyoshenskaya!

It is the talk!

There's nothing to talk about... - The main thing is that when it is necessary - he covers you with his body!

Okey-dokey... As in the trusted Shakespeare source., "She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them"...

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GOD, THANK YOU!

Father, are you?!

Farewell, my "green, wave-breathing, Don'..,  
Quietly and slowly rolling...

*a whirling vortex  
of your thick waters...*

By the way, what kind of "green"?! – Coniferous evergreen, olive, chartreuse, feldgrau, shamrock green, khaki, moss green, myrtle green., fern green, forest green, asparagus green, aqua green, marengo...?! - In general, from the cool shades of the dark sea waves color to the saturated forest colors... In a word,  
*inconceivable, incomparable,  
so unusual, and memorable...!*

Many people admired the rare color of my eyes...  
And I even passed it to my children...  
Isn't the color from you?!

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I still wonder why my father sent me so far... not to  
get the earth, right....?!

Here it is... the Millerovo railway station... And it,  
probably, didn't change much since then... A  
single-story building, although of stone, although  
with pointed-arch windows... with an  
asymmetrically projecting curved pediment... I  
would even say, of the Art Nouveau type...  
Although, apparently, quite typical for the  
beginning of the century...

And it smells of... a sad and pensive melancholy  
and... fatigue... This is probably due to the gloomy  
morning... depressing and despondent...  
It was here., where granny Daria to her  
consternation... saw a locomotive for the first  
time... and rushed to the bushes., scaring my  
father and Linka... - Again bushes....?!

If I am not mistaken... there should be an airport  
here... a military aerodrome... The plane with my  
heroic nephew Timka, after his regular "business  
trip to a hot spot", must have landed exactly here...  
(He, also, doesn't hide behind his father's high-  
ranking back!)... He had survived miraculously...  
And when he stepped on this land... No, he lay  
down... kissing it gratefully and passionately... as  
the very first and indelible love...

- Come on... you bought the tickets so easily?!

- But it's the vacation time:

*those, who have left to relax,*

*they are not returning fast,*

*and as to the rest,*

*they also don't make haste...*

- Wow! And what time does the train leave?

- In 40 minutes, something like that...

- Hooray! We got here so instantly and  
comfortably...

- The homeward journey always seems shorter  
and faster!

- That's true!

*"It's so good all under heaven,*

**That's the mystical magic!**

*As if in a boat with headsails,  
With your true and faithful mates  
Sail wherever road takes.  
On the road with some clouds,  
On the road with some clouds  
What a pleasure, when we're getting  
Safely back homeward!"*

- Look...

- Where did he show up from?! As if he walked out through a time corridor from the past., and right now... will go around the corner and once again will walk backwards... to the past, or will dissolve into nothingness...  
Tolik, give him, please, as much as we can... and even cannot...

- Here you are., get my handkerchief!

A little wisp of a kid... about ten years old., with disheveled "coal-tar" color forelock., wearing a greasy, worn-out, floor length, hand-me-down jacket... with the sleeves rolled up., and his hands... so fragile and thin...  
Same... legs (of our family type - beautiful, slender, and excessively long...), same skinny...  
"The whites of his burning eyes, bluish in their slightly oblique slits"... And the eyes seem bottomless, eternity-like...  
"His curls, hard as horsehair ringlets...", and "brown, ruddy skin, drawn tight over his angular cheek-bones"...!  
Grimy all over... like from a coal mine or a coal freight coach...  
He smells of a failed childhood...  
And "just the teeth are gleaming pretty white brightly"...

And you... don't hold me! I want to cry!  
That's really true, "the body is purified by water, the intellect - by knowledge, and the soul - by tears!"

*«Not by the plough is our glorious earth furrowed...  
Our earth is furrowed by horses' hoots,  
And sown is our earth with the heads of Cossacks.  
Fair is our quiet Don with young widows,  
Our father, the quiet Don, blossoms with orphans,  
And the waves of the quiet Don are filled with fathers' and mothers' tears...»*

*«Oh thou, our father, the quiet Don!  
Oh why dost thou, our quiet Don, so sludgy flow?*

*How should I, the quiet Don, but sludgy flow!  
From my depths the cold springs beat,  
Amid me, the quiet Don, the white fish leap...»*

Such are the old-time Cossack songs....!

Just retouching spring fog... So timely... These aren't tears... *It's nothing but the fog and drizzle...*

*"Graves are getting overgrown with grass –  
Pain is fading away as time passes...  
The wind has obliterated the traces of the departed,  
Time will obliterate the pain and memory of them..."*

- I don't agree! The traces will be obliterated, the pain will be., but the memory of them won't be forgotten, never...!

Interestingly, it turns out that all descendants of my father are officers, even including me... And an officer takes an oath of loyalty only once in a lifetime., and not of loyalty to the state but of loyalty to the Fatherland...

*« The fourth day stanitsas are glowing on fire,  
The Don spring is sweating with rains...  
All will be so awesome, poruchik Golitsyn...  
Throw bullets away, we're approaching the border,  
So, officers, wear decorations on dress uniforms!»*

GOD, THANK YOU! I LOVE YOU, DAD!  
I LOVE YOU., THE DON THAT QUIET FLOWS!

I ran after him... But he really dissolved...  
vanished without a trace...

Here comes our train, let's go.

- I love you, Antoine!  
- I love you, too, very much...

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Well., Sheremetyevo again... Soon my flight home will be announced., and even in perfect English... From such announcements, from such stunning yin-timbre and impeccable sounds, one can even learn phonetics... And I guess even... in England it won't be easy to find many specialists with this pronunciation...

A fresh, beautiful and heavy snowfall., as if on stage...

New and upcoming 2017... I'd like it to be happy, with neither global, nor local dramatic bouleversements...

It's good that it's beautifully.., but, I hope, there won't be any delay... Antoine and dinner are awaiting me on my arrival - I have even made my order...

Theoretically, however.., I am already full... Eventually, this hot chick... - a restaurant clicker... confused me and lured to a Russian restaurant with her words, "Come for lunch - we have homemade dumplings, potatoes with mushrooms and tiny pickles... very crispy"... Well, who could resist such temptations here and now in this... verbal design?! I couldn't resist.., though ordered completely different food...

I was eating and acting "as a complete fool at a funeral"... Though I had potatoes, too, but with garlic... And entrecôte - this actually well-forgotten student delicacy... - with a glass of red wine (Oh, let's go crazy!)... And then the favorite dessert... of the girl who was serving me - she has a wonderful taste! And Americano... - made especially for me by a handsome guy at the request of this very girl... Gulnara... - They love me here! And, somehow, it's a mutual feeling...

And I ended up paying in total, at the airport, including a generous tip to the students (judging by their looks, erudition and dignity), who had served me, just... a ridiculous sum of 20 euros...

At our airport.., and not in a restaurant.., but at a coffee shop.., with this money I would be able to buy only a cup of something called coffee... with some kind of an international triangle-like sandwich with... something like ham and... something like cheese...

I wonder where Senka is now. Well, at least... in what country?

Oh, Senka is calling! MY DEAR...

- Allô?
- Salut, maman. C'est moi. Comment ça va bien?
- Ça va, merci. Et toi? Ça va?
- Très bien aussi! Et où est toi?

- Je suis en Russie, à Moscou, à l'aéroport Shérémétyévo, je rentre a la maison. Et où est toi?

- À Paris. Aussi à l'aéroport, en attendant mon vol pour Singapour... qui sera annoncée bientôt. Ce que j'appelle... pour dire... que je regardais «And Quiet Flows the Don»... This is really something! The Oscars just leave much to be desired... There's still no such reward, which is worthy of such a film and its creators! There's simply nothing to compare it with! My whole world was just turned inside out! They do not play roles - they all... just live...

- Agree!

- How could such a thing be created at all?! If Sholokhov had seen this movie, he would have simply strangled Ursuljak in his hugs... And Tkachuk, and Makovetsky... And Aksinya..! And Natalia?! And Vasilisa Ilinichna?!

Oh, my boarding has just been announced, I've still a long way to run to my gate...

And the music, and the camera work, and the costumes, and the artist... And the Don... - everything... as you used to describe!

- OK, OK, OK... go ahead. We'll talk later on.

- I kiss you many-many times.

- And I kiss you.

- I adore you!

- So do I! You are my treasure!

- And you are mine!

- That's it, I kiss you! GO WITH GOD!

- Adieu!

Yes., this film is not one of those, about which you forget before the closing credits end...

#### MY PRECIOUS! MY TREASURE!

That's the mystical magic! – It's so beautiful, well-groomed, tidy, stylish, welcoming... everywhere here., and everything is... just sooo... decent... in the airport, in Moscow, and, in general., from the Don "and to the Yenisei... in Rasseya..." as once it used to be in Europe., at which we used to look humbly., mouth agape with admiration, wonder, astonishment, and curiosity...

And especially... how amazing... that in Tolyatti I kept constantly reminding myself... that I wasn't in Moscow... And here, in Moscow, I keep repeating to myself every now and then... that I'm not in Tolyatti... And this is something... despite the fact... that Tolyatti is considered to be "a dying city" ... – I wish everyone were dying like that...



Over there, at the neighboring gate, my dear Poles are sitting and also waiting for their flight to Warsaw... Their faces are grim, with an extremely skeptical mien... - the lips are pulled, teeth - clenched... Well, they really don't like everything here like this, in spite of all the sanctions...

But when my seven year old grandson., an American Turk *Peter* – an honorary citizen of the city of New York (because he was born on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, – ... and his great grandfather *Peter's* birthday), having already visited many places (New York, London, Istanbul, Dubai, and Addis Ababa...) and having seen a lot of things., happened to be in Moscow... and was sitting on the podium at the mausoleum., looking at the ruby stars, parade and fireworks., he expressed his sincere delight saying, "Moscow is THE BEST city in the world!" And he was right!

Oh., not in vain... his great grandfather "was shedding blood, sweat, and tears" ...!

#### EPILOGUE <sup>[1]</sup>:

1. О. Митяев. Давай с тобой поговорим
2. Подмосковные Вечера. Муз. В. Соловьёв-Седой; сл. М. Матусовский
3. Город, которого нет. Муз. И. Корнелюк; сл. Р. Лисиц
4. П. И. Чайковский. Лебединое озеро
5. С. Aznavour. Nathalie
6. Ф. Киркоров. Три счастливых дня. Муз. А. Пугачёва; сл. И. Резник
7. А. Пугачёва. Не отрекаются, любя. Муз. М. Минков; сл. В.Тушнова
8. А. Пугачёва. Айсберг. Муз. И. Николаев; сл. Л. Козлова
9. Ф. Киркоров. Без тебя. Муз. Р. Паулс; сл. И. Резник
10. Мегapolis. Ангел
11. Большой детский хор ЦТ и ВР. Весёлый ветер. Муз. И. Дунаевский; сл. В. Лебедев-Кумач
12. Г. Отс. Песенка о капитане. Муз. И. Дунаевский; сл. В. Лебедев-Кумач
13. С. Aznavour. Legende de Stenka Razine. Муз. и сл. Д. Садовников
14. Л. Зыкина. Степь да степь кругом. Русская народная песня
15. Хор Донских казаков С. Жарова. По морям, по волнам... Муз. и сл. В. Межевича
16. Е. Дятлов. Прощайте, скалистые горы! Муз. Е. Жарковский; сл. Н. Букин
17. Д. Д. Шостакович. Симфония №7, «Ленинградская», ор. 60, до мажор, Allegretto, оркестр Мариинского театра под управлением В. Гергиева
18. А. Крамаренко. Надежды маленький оркестрик. Муз. и сл. Б. Окуджава

19. Я. Сумишевский, Е. Лазарева. Тучи в голубом. Муз. А. Журбин; сл. В. Аксёнов, П. Синявский
20. А. Пугачёва. Голубка. Муз. С. Ирадьё; русский текст Т. Сикорская
21. Мегаполис. Один, одна...
22. М. Звездинский. Поручик Голицын
23. А. Северный. Не надо грустить, Господа Офицеры...
24. А. Малинин. Поручик Голицын
25. С. Лемешев. Хуторок
26. Я. Сибелиус. Грустный вальс. Парижский оркестр под управлением П. Ярви
27. Д. Арбенина. Удиви меня. Муз. И. Духовный
28. И. Духовный. Удиви меня
29. Мегаполис. Супертанго
30. Ю. Ткаченко, С. Свириденко. Так не бывает
31. Ж. Бичевская. Поручик Голицын
32. Ю. Красавин. Главная тема к сериалу «Тихий Дон»
33. О. Митяев. Давай с тобой поговорим
34. Несчастный случай. Песня о Москве. Муз. и сл. А. Кортнев
35. М. Магомаев, В. Сюткин. Лучший город земли. Муз. А. Бабаджанян; сл. Л. Дербенёв

[<sup>1</sup>] Bioenergy harmonizer



The small anti-submarine ship **ONEGA** was commissioned into the fleet in 1991.

Stockholm, 2017